

LEONIDAS.

A

P O E M.

— — Θανεῖν δ'οῖσιν ἀνάγυκα
Τί κε τις ἀνώνυμον γῆγεις ἐν σκότῳ
Καθήμενος ἔψοι μάταν, ἀπάντων
Καλῶν ἀμμογος; PIND. OLYMP. OD. I.

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THE P R E F A C E.

TO illustrate the following poem, to vindicate the subject from the censure of improbability, and to shew by the concurring evidence of the best historians, that such disinterested public virtue did once exist, I have thought, it would not be improper to prefix the subsequent narration.

WHILE Darius, the father of Xerxes, was yet on the throne of Persia, Cleomenes and Demaratus were kings in La-

cedæmon, both descended from Hercules. Demaratus was unfortunately expos'd by an uncertain rumour, which render'd his legitimacy suspected, to the malice and treachery of his colleague, who had conceiv'd a personal resentment against him; for Cleomenes taking advantage of this report, persuaded the Spartans to examine into the birth of Demaratus, and refer the difficulty to the oracle of Delphi; and was assisted in his perfidious designs by a near relation of Demaratus, nam'd Leotychides, who aspir'd to succeed him in his dignity. Cleomenes found means to corrupt the priestess of Delphi, who declar'd Demaratus not legitimate. Thus by the base practices of his colleague Cleomenes, and his kinsman Leotychides, Demaratus was expell'd from his office of king in the commonwealth, after having frequently signaliz'd his valour

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four in its service. He went into voluntary banishment, and retiring to Asia was there protected by Darius; while Leotychides succeeded to the regal authority in Sparta. Upon the death of Cleomenes Leonidas was made king, who rul'd in conjunction with this Leotychides, when Xerxes, the son of Darius, invaded Greece. The number of land and naval forces, which accompanied that monarch, together with the servants, women, and other usual attendants on the army of an eastern prince, amounted to upwards of five millions, as reported by Herodotus, who wrote within a few years after the event, and publicly recited his history at the Olympic games. In this general assembly not only from Greece itself, but from every part of the world, wherever a colony of Grecians was planted, had he greatly exceeded the truth, he must certainly

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have been detected, and censur'd by some among so great a multitude, and such a voluntary falsehood must have entirely destroy'd that merit and authority, which have procur'd to Herodotus the veneration of all posterity, with the appellation of the father of history. On the first news of this attempt upon their liberty a convention was immediately held at the Isthmus of Corinth, compos'd of deputies from the several states of Greece, to consult on proper measures for the public safety. The Spartans also sent messengers to enquire of the oracle at Delphi into the event of the war, who return'd with an answer from the priestess of Apollo, that either a king descended from Héracles must die, or Lacedæmon would be entirely destroy'd. Leonidas immediately offer'd to sacrifice his life for the safety of Lacedæmon, and marching to Thermopylæ possess'd himself of that

that important pass with three hundred of his countrymen; who with the forces of some other cities in the Peloponnesus, together with the Thebans, Thespians, and the troops of those states, which adjoin'd to Thermopylæ, compos'd an army of near eight thousand men.

XERXES was now advanc'd as far, as Thessalia; when hearing, that a small body of Grecians was assembled at Thermopylæ, with some Lacedæmonians at their head, and among the rest Leonidas, a descendant of Hercules, he dispatch'd a single horseman before to observe their numbers, and discover their designs. When this horseman approach'd, he could not take a view of the whole camp, which lay conceal'd behind a rampart formerly rais'd by the Phocians at the entrance of Thermopylæ; so that his whole attention was employ'd on those,

who were on guard before the wall, and who at that instant chanc'd to be the Lacedæmonians. Their manner and gestures greatly astonish'd the Persian; some were amusing themselves in gymnastic exercises; others were combing their hair; and all discover'd a total disregard of him, whom they suffer'd to depart without molestation, and report to Xerxes, what he had seen: which appearing to that prince quite ridiculous, he sent for Demaratus, who was with him in the camp, and requir'd him to explain this strange behaviour of his countrymen. Demaratus inform'd him, that it was a custom among the Spartans to comb down and adjust their hair, when they were determin'd to fight till the last extremity. Xerxes notwithstanding in the confidence of his power sent ambassadors to the Grecians to demand their arms, to bid them disperse, and become his friends and allies;

lies; which proposals being receiv'd with disdain, he commanded the Medes and Saces to seize on the Grecians, and bring them alive into his presence. These nations immediately attack'd the Grecians, and were soon repuls'd with great slaughter; fresh troops still succeeded, but with no better fortune than the first, being oppos'd to an enemy not only superior in valour and resolution, but who had the advantage of discipline, and were furnish'd with better arms both offensive and defensive.

PLUTARCH in his Laconic apothegms reports, that the Persian king offer'd to invest Leonidas with the sovereignty of all Greece, provided he would join his arms to those of Persia. This offer was too considerable a condescension to have been made before a tryal of their force, and must therefore have been proposed

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by Xerxes after such a series of ill success, as might probably have depress'd the insolence of his temper; and it may be easily suppos'd, that the virtue of Leonidas was proof against any temptations of that nature. Whether this be a fact, or not, thus much is certain, that Xerxes was reduc'd to extreme difficulties by this resolute defence of Thermopylæ; till he was extricated from his distrefs by a Malian nam'd Epiates, who conducted twenty thousand of the Persian army into Greece through a pass, which lay higher up the country among the mountains of Oeta: whereas the passage at Thermopylæ was situated on the sea-shore between the end of those mountains and the Malian bay. The defence of the upper pass had been committed to a thousand Phocians, who upon the first sight of the enemy inconsiderately abandon'd their station, and put themselves in array

ray upon a neighbouring eminence; but the Persians wisely avoided an engagement, and with the utmost expedition march'd to Thermopylæ. Leonidas no sooner receiv'd information, that the Barbarians had pass'd the mountains, but he commanded the allies to retreat, reserving the three hundred Spartans, and four hundred Thebans, whom, as they follow'd him with reluctance at first, he now compell'd to stay. But the Thessalians, whose number amounted to seven hundred, would not be persuaded by Leonidas to forsake him. Their commander was Demophilus, and the most eminent amongst them for his valour was Dithyrambus. Among the Spartans the most conspicuous next to Leonidas was Dieneces, who being told, that the multitude of Persian arrows would obscure the sun, replied, the battle would then be in the shade. Two

brothers

brothers named Alpheus and Maron are also recorded for their valour, and were Lacedæmonians. Megistias a priest, by birth an Acarnanian, refus'd to desert Leonidas, though intreated by him to consult his safety, and retire; but sent away his only son, and remain'd himself behind to die with the Lacedæmonians. Among the three hundred Spartans were two call'd Eurytus and Aristodemus, who being almost blind were dismiss'd by Leonidas. Of these Aristodemus return'd home; but Eurytus waited, till the Persians descended from the hills, and then commanding his slave to lead him among the combatants was slain with the rest of his countrymen.

HERODOTUS relates, that Leonidas drew up his men in the broadest part of Thermopylæ; where, being surrounded by the Persians, they fell with great

num-

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numbers of their enemies: but Plutarch, Diodorus Siculus, and others affirm, that the Grecians attack'd the very camp of Xerxes in the night. The action is thus describ'd by Diodorus. "The Grecians "having now rejected all thoughts of "safety, preferring glory to life, unani- "mously call'd on their general to lead "them against the Persians, before they "could be appris'd, that their friends "had pass'd round the mountains. Leo- "nidas embrac'd the occasion, which "the ready zeal of his soldiers afforded, "and commanded them forthwith to "dine, as men, who were to sup in E- "lysium. Himself in consequence of "this command took a repast, as the "means to furnish strength for a long "continuance, and to give perseverance "in danger. After a short refreshment "the Grecians were now prepar'd, and "receiv'd orders to assaile the enemies

"camp,

“camp, to put all, they met, to the
“sword, and force a passage to the royal
“pavilion; when, form’d into one com-
“pact body with Leonidas himself at
“their head, they march’d against the
“Persians, and enter’d their camp at
“the dead of night. The Barbarians
“wholly unprepar’d, and blindly con-
“jecturing, that their friends were de-
“feated, and themselves attack’d by the
“united power of Greece, hurry toge-
“ther from their tents with the utmost
“disorder and consternation. Many
“were slain by Leonidas and his party,
“but much greater multitudes by their
“own troops, to whom in the midst of
“this blind confusion they were not dis-
“tinguishable from enemies: for as night
“took away the power of discerning
“truely, and the tumult was spread uni-
“versally over the camp, a prodigious
“slaughter must naturally ensue. The
“want

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“want of command, of a watch-word,
“and of confidence in themselves re-
“duc’d the Persians to such a state of
“confusion, that they destroy’d each
“other without distinction. Had Xerxes
“continued in the royal pavilion, the
“Grecians without difficulty might have
“brought the war to a speedy conclusion,
“by his death; but he at the beginning
“of the tumult betook himself to flight
“with the utmost precipitation; when
“the Grecians rushing into the tent put
“to the sword most of those, who were
“left behind: then, while night lasted,
“they rang’d through the whole camp
“in diligent search of the tyrant. When
“morning appear’d, the Persians per-
“ceiving the true state of things held
“the inconsiderable number of their ene-
“mies in contempt; yet were so ter-
“rified at their valour, that they avoided
“a near engagement; but inclosing the
“Gre-

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“Grecians on every side shower’d their
“darts and arrows upon them at a dis-
“tance, and in the end destroy’d their
“whole body. Such was the period of
“their lives, who under the conduct of
“Leonidas defended the pass of Ther-
“mopylæ. Who can refrain from ad-
“miring the virtue of these men, who
“with one consent maintaining the post
“allotted by their country clearfully
“renounc’d their lives for the common
“safety of Greece, and esteem’d a glo-
“rious death more eligible than to live
“with dishonour? Nor is the conser-
“nation of the Persians incredible. Who
“among those Barbarians could have
“conjectur’d such an event? Who could
“have expected, that five hundred men
“would have dared to attack a million?
“Wherefore shall not all posterity from
“that day reflect on the virtue of these
“men as the object of imitation, who,
“tho’

“tho’ the loss of their lives was the necessary consequence of their undertaking, “were yet unconquer’d in their spirit; “and among all the great names deliver’d down to remembrance are the “only heroes, who obtain’d more glory “in their fall, than others from the “brightest victories? With justice may “they be deem’d the preservers of the “Grecian liberty, even preferably to “those, who were conquerors in the “battles fought afterwards with Xerxes; “for the memory of their valour, who “fell at Thermopylæ, for ever dejected “the Barbarians, while the Greeks were “fir’d with emulation to equal such a “pitch of magnanimity. Upon the “whole there never were any before “these, who attain’d to immortality “through the meer excess of virtue; “whence the praise of their fortitude “has not been recorded by historians “only,

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“only, but has been celebrated by numbers of poets, among others by Simonides the lyric.”

PAUSANIAS in his Laconics considers the defence of Thermopylæ, as an action superior to any atchiev'd by their contemporaries, and to all the exploits of preceding ages. “Never (says he) had Xerxes beheld Greece, or laid in ashes the city of Athens, had not his forces under Hydarnes been conducted thro' a path over Oeta, and by that means encompassing the Greeks overcome and slain Leonidas.” Nor is it improbable, that Leonidas should have maintain'd his post in so narrow a pass, till the whole army of Xerxes had perish'd by famine. At the same time the Persian navy had been miserably shattered by a storm, and worsted in an engagement with the Athenians at Artemisium.

To

To conclude, the fall of Leonidas and his brave companions, so meritorious to their country, and so glorious to themselves, has obtain'd such an high degree of veneration and applause from past ages, that few among the antient compilers of history have been silent on this amazing instance of magnanimity and zeal for liberty; and many are the epigrams and inscriptions now extant, some on the whole body, others on particulars, who died at Thermopylæ, still preserving their memory in every nation conversant with learning, and at this distance of time still rendering their virtue the object of admiration and praise.

I SHALL now detain the reader no longer, than to take this public occasion of expressing my sincere regard for the **LORD VISCOUNT COBHAM**, and the sense of my obligations for the early honour

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nour of his friendship. To him I inscribe the following poem; and herein might I be justified, independent of all personal motives, from his Lordship's public conduct so highly distinguish'd by his disinterested zeal, and unshaken fidelity to his country, not less in civil life than in the field: and to whom a poem, founded on a character eminent for military glory, and love of liberty, is due from the nature of the subject.

R. GLOVER.

LEONIDAS.

A

P O E M.

ГАДЫОД



М 1909

LEONIDAS.

BOOK I.

The Argument.

Xerxes, king of Persia, having drawn together the whole force of his empire, and pass'd over the Hellespont into Thrace with a design to conquer Greece; the deputies from the several states of that country, who had some time before assembled themselves at the Isthmus of Corinth to deliberate on proper measures for resisting the invader, were no sooner appris'd of his march into Thrace, than they determin'd without further delay to dispute his passage at the straits of Thermopylæ, the most accessible part of Greece on the side of Thrace and Thessaly. Alpheus, one of the deputies from Sparta, repairs to that city, and communicates this resolution to his countrymen; who chanced that day to be assembled in expectation of receiving an answer from Apollo, to whom they had

sent a messenger to consult about the event of the war. Leotychides, one of their two kings, counsels the people to advance no further, than the Isthmus of Corinth, which separates the Peloponnesus, where Lacedaemon was situated, from the rest of Greece; but Leonidas, the other king, dissuades them from it. Agis, the messenger, who had been deputed to Delphi, and brother to the queen of Leonidas, returns with the oracle; which denounces ruin to the Lacedaemonians, unless one of their kings lays down his life for the publick. Leonidas offers himself for the victim. Three hundred Spartans are chosen to accompany him to Thermopylæ, and Alpheus returns to the Isthmus. Leonidas, after an interview with his queen, departs from Lacedaemon. At the end of six days he encamps near the Isthmus, when he is joind by Alpheus, who describes the auxiliaries, that wait at the Isthmus, those, who are already possess'd of Thermopylæ, as also the pass itself; and concludes with a relation of the captivity of his brother Polydorus in Persia.

REHEARSE, O Muse, the deeds and glorious death
Of that fam'd Spartan, who withstood the pow'r
Of Xerxes near Thermopylæ, and fell

To

Book I. L E O N I D A S.

3

To save his country. When from Asia's coast
With half the nations of the peopled globe 5
The Persian king the Hellefponit had pass'd,
And now in Thrace his boundleſſ camp was spread;
Soon to the Isthmus, where th'assembled chiefs
Of Greece in anxious council long had sat,
How best their menac'd liberties to guard, 10
The dreadful tidings reach'd. The near approach
Of Asia's lord determines their resolves.
These they convey to all the Grecian states.
Back to Eurotas' shores, where Sparta rose,
Laconian Alpheus speeds: in conuncil there 15
He finds the Spartan people with their kings;
Their kings, who boast an origin divine,
From Hercules descended. They the sons
Of Lacedæmon had conven'd to learn
The sacred mandates of th' immortal gods,
That morn expected from the Delphian dome;
But in their presence Alpheus first appear'd,
And thus address'd them. For immediate war
Prepare, O Spartans. Xerxes' num'rous pow'rs
Already fill the trembling bounds of Trace. 25

The Isthmian councii hath decreed to guard
The strait and rocky entrance into Greece,
Thermopylæ; where ev'n a slender force
May stem the torrent of unnumber'd foes.

He said, when Leotychides, who shar'd 30
The rule with great Leonidas, bespake
The Spartans thus. My countrymen, give ear.
Why from her bosom should Laconia send
Her valiant sons to wage a distant war
For others' safety; why exhaust her strength 35
And thin her numbers in defence of those,
Who far remote from Lacedæmon dwell
Beyond the Isthmus? there the Gods have plac'd
Our native ramparts, there our empire's bound;
And there alone our country claims our swords. 40

He ceas'd. The people with assenting shouts
Replied, when thus Leonidas began.

O ~~most~~ ungen'rous counsel! most unjust,
And base desertion of the Grecian weal!

What!

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5

What! shall th'Athenians, whose assiduous fleets 45
Undaunted watch th' innumerable foes,
Where'er they menace our affrighted shores,
And trust th'impending dangers of the field
To Sparta's well-known valour; shall they hear,
That we, disowning thus the gen'ral cause, 50
Maintain the Isthmus only, and expose
The rest of Greece, ev'n Athens, while she guards
Our naked coasts, to all the waste of war,
Her walls to ruin, and her fields to flames,
Her sons, her matrons, and her hoary fires 55
To violation, servitude, and shame?
O should they hear such counsels guide our state,
Would they not court the first propitious gale
To waft them far from such perfidious friends,
And raise new seats in other climes remote, 60
Safe from insulting foes, and false allies?
Then should we soon behold the proud array
Of Xerxes' navy with their hostile beaks
Affront our shores, and deluge all our fields
With inexhausted numbers. Half the Greeks, 65
By us betray'd to bondage, would support

The Persian king, and lift th' avengin spear
For our destruction. But, my friends, reject
Such mean and dang'rous counsels, which will blast
Your long establish'd glories, and assist 70
The proud invader. O eternal king
Of gods and mortals, elevate our minds !
Each low and partial passion thence dispel !
Till this great truth in ev'ry heart be known,
That none, but those, who aid the public cause, 75
Can shield their countries, or themselves from chains.

He said, by shame suppres'd each clam'rous voice
Was lost in silence; till a gen'ral shout
Proclaim'd th' approach of Agis from the fane,
Where, taught by Phœbus on the Delphic hill, 80
The Pythian maid his oracles reveal'd.
He came; but discontent and grief o'ercast
His anxious brow. Reluctant he advanc'd,
And now prepar'd to speak. Th' impatient throng
Was gather'd round him; motionless they stood 95
With expectation; not a whisper told
The silent fear, but all on Agis gaze;

And

And still as death attend the solemn tale.
As o'r the western waves, when ev'ry storm
Is hush'd within its cavern, and a breeze 90
Soft-breathing lightly with its wings along
The slacken'd cordage glides, the sailor's ear
Perceives no sound throughout the vast expanse;
None, but the murmurs of the sliding prowe,
Which slowly parts the smooth and yielding main: 95
So through the wide and listning croud no sound,
No voice, but thine, O Agis, broke the air,
Declaring thus the oracle divine.

I WENT to Delphi; I enquir'd what fate
Was doom'd to Sparta from th'impending war; 100
When thus th' all-seeing deity replied.
" Inhabitants of Sparta, Persia's arms
" Shall lay your proud and ancient seat in dust;
" Unless a king from Hercules deriv'd
" Cause Lacedæmon for his death to mourn.,, 105

As, when the hand of Perseus had disclos'd
The snakes of dire Medusa; all, who view'd

The Gorgon features, were congeal'd to stone,
With ghastly eye-balls on the hero bent,
And horrour living in their marble form; 110
Thus with amazement rooted, where they stood,
And froze with speechless terrour, on their kings
The Spartans gaz'd: but soon their anxious looks
All on the great Leonidas unite,
Long known his country's refuge. He alone 115
Remains unshaken. Rising he displays
His godlike presence. Dignity and grace
Adorn his frame, and manly beauty join'd
With strength Herculean. On his aspect shines
Sublimest virtue, and desire of fame, 120
Where justice gives the laurel; in his eye
The inextinguishable spark, which fires
The souls of patriots: while his brow supports
Undaunted valour, and contempt of death.
Serene he rose, and thus address'd the throng. 125

Why this astonishment on ev'ry face,
Ye men of Sparta? Does the name of death
Create this fear and wonder? O my friends!

Why

Why do we labour through the arduous paths,
Which lead to virtue? Fruitless were the toil, 130
Above the reach of human feet were plac'd
The distant summit, if the fear of death
Could intercept our passage. But in vain
His blackest frowns and terrors he assumes
To shake the firmness of the mind, which knows 135
That wanting virtue life is pain and woe,
That wanting liberty ev'n virtue mourns,
And looks around for happiness in vain.
Then speak, O Sparta, and demand my life;
My heart exulting answers to thy call, 140
And smiles on glorious fate. To live with fame
The Gods allow to many; but to die
With equal lustre, is a blessing, Heav'n
Selects from all the choicest boons of fate,
And with a sparing hand on few bestows. 145

He said. New wonder fix'd the gazing throng.
In silence Joy and Admiration sat
Suspending praise. At length with high acclaim
The arch of heav'n resounded, when amid
Th' assembly stood Dieneces, and spake. 150

So from Thermopylæ may Sparta's shouts
Affright the ear of Asia! Haste, my friends,
To guard the gates of Greece, which open stand
To Tyranny and Rapine. They with dread
Will shrink before your standards, and again 155
In servile Persia seek their native seats.
Your wives, your sons, your parents, gen'ral Greece
Forbid delay; and equal to the cause
A chief behold: can Spartans ask for more? 159

He ceas'd; when Alpheus thus. It well becomes
The Spartans held the chiefs of Greece, and fam'd
For dauntless courage, and unyielding hearts,
Which neither want, nor pain, nor death can bend,
To lead the rest to battle. Then with speed
From all your number form a chosen band, 165
While I returning will my seat resume
Among the Isthmian council, and declare
Your instant march. Our brave allies, I deem,
Now on the Isthmus wait the Spartan king;
All but the Locrian and Bœotian force, 170
With Phocis' youth, appointed to secure

Ther-

Thermopylae. This said, not long he paus'd,
But with unwearied steps his course renews.

Now from th' assembly with majestic steps
Forth moves their godlike king, with conscious
worth

175

His gen'rous bosom glowing; like his fire,
Th' invincible Alcides, when he trod
With ardent speed to face in horrid war
The triple form of Geryon, or against
The bulk of huge Antæus match his strength. 180

SAY, Muse, who next present their dauntless breasts
To meet all danger in their country's cause?
Dieneces advances sages, and brave,
And skill'd along the martial field to range
The order'd ranks of battle; Maron next, 185
To Alpheus dear, his brother, and his friend.
Then rose Megistias with his blooming heir,
Joy of his age, and Menalippus call'd;
Megistias, wise and venerable seer,
Whose penetrating mind, as fame records, 190

Could

Could from the entrails of the victim slain
Before the altar, and the mystic flight
Of birds foresee the dark events of time.

Though sprung a stranger on the distant shore

Of Acarnania, for his worth receiv'd,

195

And hospitably cherish'd, he the wreath

Pontific bore amid the Spartan camp;

Serene in danger, nor his sacred arm

From warlike toils secluding, nor unskill'd

To wield the sword, or poise the weighty spear. 200

Him Agis follow'd, brother to the queen

Of great Leonidas; his friend, in war

His tried companion. Graceful were his steps,

And gentle his demeanour. Still his soul

Preserv'd its rigid virtue, though refin'd

205

With arts unknown to Lacedæmon's race.

High was his office. He, when Sparta's weal

Their aid and counsel from the gods requir'd,

Was sent the sacred messenger to learn

Their mystic will in oracles declar'd

210

From rocky Delphi, and Dodona's shade,

Or sea-incircled Delos, or the cell

Of dark Trophonius round Bœotia known.

Three hundred more compleat th'intrepid band.

BUT to his home Leonidas retir'd.

215

There calm in secret thought he thus explor'd

His mighty soul, while nature to his breast

A short-liv'd terror call'd. — What sudden grief,

What cold reluctance thus unmans my heart,

And whispers, that I fear? — Can death dismay 220

Leonidas, so often seen and scorn'd,

When clad most dreadful in the battle's front? —

Or to relinquish life in all its pride,

With all my honours blooming round my head,

Repines my soul? or rather to forsake, 222

Eternally forsake my weeping wife,

My infant offspring, and my faithful friends? —

Leonidas awake! Shall these withstand

The public safety? Lo! thy country calls. —

O sacred voice, I hear thee! At that sound 230

Returning virtue brightens in my heart;

Fear vanishes before her. Death, receive

My unreluctant hand, and lead me on.

Thou too, O Fame, attendant on my fall,

With

With wings unwearyed shalt protect my tomb, 235
Nor Time himself shall violate my praise.

THE hero thus confirm'd his virtuous soul,
When Agis enter'd. If till now my tongue
(He thus began) O brother, has delay'd
To pay its grateful off'ring of the praise, 240
Thy merit claims, and only fill'd the cries
Of general applause, forgive thy friend;
Since her distresses, hers, whom most you love,
Detain'd me from thee. O unequall'd man!
Though Lacedæmon call thy first regard, 245
Forget not her, who now for thee laments
In sorrows, which fraternal love in vain
Hath strove to sooth. Leonidas embrac'd
His gen'rous friend, and thus replied. Most dear
And best of men! conceive not, but my heart 250
Must still remember her, from whom my life
Its largest share of happiness derives.
Can I, who yield my breath, lest others mourn,
Lest thousands should be wretched; when she pines,
More lov'd than any, though less dear than all, 255

Can

Can I neglect her griefs! In future days
If thou with grateful memory record
My name and fate, O Sparta, pass not this
Unheeded by; the life, I gave for thee,
Knew not a painful hour to tire my soul, 260
Nor were they common joys, I left behhind.

So spake the patriot, and his heart o'erflow'd
With fondest passion; then in eager haste
The faithful partner of his bed he sought.
Amid her weeping children sat the queen, 265
Immoveable and mute; her swimming eyes
Fix'd on the earth. Her arms were folded o'er
Her lab'ring bosom blotted with her tears.
As, when a dusky mist involves the sky,
The moon through all the dreary vapours spreads
The radiant vesture of its silver light 271
O'er the dull face of nature; so her charms
Divinely graceful shone upon her grief,
Bright'ning the cloud of woe. The chief approach'd.
Soon as in gentlest phrase his well-known voice
Her drooping mind awaken'd, for a time 276

Its

Its cares were hush'd: she lifts her languid head,
And thus gives ut'rance to her tender thoughts.

O THOU, whose presence is my only joy,
If thus, Leonidas, thy looks and voice 280
Can dissipate at once the sharpest pangs,
How greatly am I wretched; who no more
Must hear that voice, which lulls my anguish thus,
Nor see that face, which makes affliction smile!

THIS said, returning grief her breast invades. 285
Her orphan children, her devoted lord
Pale, bleeding, breathless on the field of death,
Her ever-during solitude of woe,
All rise in mingled horrour to her sight,
When thus in bitt'rest agony she spoke. 290

O WHITHER art thou going from my arms!
Shall I no more behold thee! Oh! no more
In conquest clad, and wrapt in glorious dust
Wilt thou return to greet thy native soil,
And make thy dwelling joyful! Ah! too brave,

Why

Why wouldst thou hasten to the dreary gates 296

Of death, uncall'd? Another might have fall'n,

Like thee a victim of Alcides' race,

Less dear to all, and Sparta been secure.

Now ev'ry eye with mine is drown'd in tears, 300

All with these babes lament their father lost,

But oh! how heavy is our lot of pain!

Our sighs must last, when ev'ry other breast

Exults with transport, and the public joy

Will but increase our anguish. Yet unmov'd, 305

Thou didst not heed our sorrows, didst not seek

A moment's pause, to teach us how to bear

Thy endless absence, or like thee to die.

UNUTTERABLE sorrow here confin'd

Her voice. These words Leonidas return'd. 310

I SEE, I feel thy anguish, nor my soul

Has ever known the prevalence of love,

E'er prov'd a father's fondness, as this hour;

Nor, when most ardent to assert my fame,

Was once my heart insensible to thee,

315

How had it stain'd the honours of my name
To hesitate a moment, and suspend
My country's fate, till shameful life prefer'd
By my inglorious colleague left no choice,
But what in me were infamy to shun, 320
Not virtue to accept? Then deem no more,
That of thy love regardless, or thy tears,
I haste uncall'd to death. The voice of Fate,
The gods, my fame, my country bid me bleed. 324
—Oh! thou dear mourner! wherefore streams afresh
That flood of woe? Why heaves with sighs renew'd
That tender breast? Leonidas must fall.
Alas! far heavier misery impends
O'er thee and these, if soften'd by thy tears
I shamefully refuse to yield that breath, 330
Which justice, glory, liberty, and heav'n
Claim for my country, for my sons, and thee.
Think on my long unalter'd love. Reflect
On my paternal fondness. Has my heart
E'er known a pause of love, or pious care? 335
Now shall that care, that tenderness be prov'd
Most warm and faithful. When thy husband dies

For

For Lacedæmon's safety, thou wilt share,
Thousand thy children, the diffusive good.
Should I, thus singled from the rest of men, 340
Alone intrusted by th'immortal Gods
With pow'r to save a people, should my soul
Desert that sacred cause, thee too I yield
To sorrow, and to shame; for thou must weep
With Lacedæmon, must with her sustain 345
Thy painful portion of oppression's weight.
Thy sons behold now worthy of their names,
And Spartan birth. Their growing bloom must pine
In shame and bondage, and their youthful hearts
Beat at the sound of liberty no more. 350
On their own virtue, and their father's fame,
When he the Spartan freedom hath confirm'd,
Before the world illustrious shall they rise,
Their country's bulwark, and their mother's joy.

HERE paus'd the patriot. With religious awe 355
Grief heard the voice of Virtue. No complaint
The solemn silence broke. Tears ceas'd to flow:
Ceas'd for a moment; soon again to stream.

For now in arms before the palace rang'd
His brave companions of the war demand 360
Their leader's presence; then her griefs renew'd,
Too great for utt'rance, intercept her sighs,
And freeze each accent on her fal'ring tongue.
In speechless anguish on the hero's breast
She sinks. On ev'ry side his children press, 365
Hang on his knees, and kiss his honour'd hand.
His soul no longer struggles to confine
Its strong compunction. Down the hero's cheek,
Down flows the manly sorrow. Great in woe
Amid his children, who inclose him round, 370
He stands indulging tenderness and love
In graceful tears; when thus with lifted eyes
Address'd to heav'n: Thou ever-living pow'r,
Look down propitious, fire of gods and men!
And to this faithful woman, whose desert 375
May claim thy favour, grant the hours of peace.
And thou, my great forefather, son of Jove,
O Hercules, neglect not these thy race!
But since that spirit, I from thee derive,
Now bears me from them to resistless fate; 380

Do

Do thou support their virtue! be they taught
Like thee with glorious labour life to grace,
And from their father let them learn to die!

So saying, forth he issues, and assumes
Before the band his station of command. 385

They now proceed. So mov'd the host of heav'n
Down from Olympus in majestic march,
On Jove attendant to the flaming plains
Of Phlegra, there to face the giant sons
Of Earth and Titan: he before them tow'r'd. 390
Thus through the streets of Lacedæmon pass'd
Leonidas. Before his footsteps bow
The multitude exulting. On he treads
Rever'd and honour'd. Their inraptur'd sight
Pursues his graceful stature, and their tongues 395
Extol and hail him as their guardian god.

Firm in his nervous hand he grasps his spear.
Down from his shoulders to his ankles hangs
The massy shield, and o'er his burnish'd helm
The purple plumage nods. Harmonious youths, 400
Around whose brows entwining laurels play'd,

In lofty-sounding strains his praise record;
While snowy-finger'd virgins all the ways
With od'rous garlands strew'd. His bosom now
Was all possess'd with glory, which dispell'd 405
Whate'er of grief remain'd, or fond regret
For those he left behind. The rev'rend train
Of Lacedæmon's senate now approach'd
To give their solemn, last farewell, and grace
Their hero's parting steps. Around him flow'd 410
In civil pomp their venerable robes
Mix'd with the blaze of arms. The radiant troop
Of warriours press'd behind him. Maron here,
With Menalippus warm in flow'ry prime,
And Agis there with manly grace advanc'd, 415
Dieneces, and Acarnania's seer,
Megistias sage. The Spartan dames ascend
The loftiest domes, and thronging o'er the roofs
Gaze on their sons and husbands, as they march.
So parted Argo from th' Iolchian strand, 420
And plough'd the foaming surge. Thessalia's nymphs
Their hills forsaking, and their hallow'd groves,
Rang'd on the cliffs, which overshade the deep,

Still

Still on the distant vessel fix'd their sight;
Where Greece her chosen heroes had embark'd
To seek the dangers of the Cholchian shore. 426

SWIFT on his course Leonidas proceeds.

Soon is Eurotas pass'd and Lerna's banks,
Where his unconquer'd ancestor subdu'd
The many-headed Hydra, and with fame 430
Immortaliz'd the lake. Th'unwearied hands

Next through the pines of Mænalus he led,

And down Parthenius urg'd the rapid toil.

Six days incessant thus the Spartans march, 434

When now they hear the hoarse-resounding tide

Beat on the Isthmus. Here their tents they spread.

Below the wide horizon then the sun

Had sunk his beamy head. The queen of night

Gleam'd from the center of th'ethereal vault,

And o'er the dusky robe of darkness shed 440

Her silver light. Leonidas detains

Dieneces and Agis. Open stands

The tall pavilion, and admits the moon,

As here they sat conversing, from the hill,

Which rose before them, one of noble port 445
Appears with speed descending. Lightly down
The slope he treads, and calls aloud. They heard,
And knew the voice of Alpheus. From their seats
They rose, and thus Leonidas began.

O θεού, whom heav'n with swiftness hath endu'd
To match the ardour of thy daring soul, 451
What calls thee from the Isthmus? Do the Greeks
Neglect to arm, nor face the public foe?

I come to meet thee (Alpheus thus return'd)
A messenger, who gladsome tidings bears. 455
Through Greece the voice of liberty is heard,
And all unfold their banners in her cause;
The Thebans only with reluctant hands.
Arcadia's sons with morning shalt thou join,
Who on the Isthmus wait thy great command. 460
With Diophantus Mantinea sends
Five hundred spears; nor less from Tegea's walls
With Hegesander move. A thousand more,
Who in Orchomenus reside, who range

Along

Along Parrhasius, and Cyllene's brow, 465
Or near the foot of Erymanthus dwell,
Or on Alphéus' banks, with various chiefs,
Attend thy call; but most is Clonius fam'd
Of stature huge: unshaken as a rock,
His giant bulk the line of war sustains. 470
Four hundred warriours brave Alcmaeon draws
From stately Corinth's tow'rs. Two hundred march
From Phlius, whom Eupalamus commands.
An equal number of Mycena's race
Aristobulus heads. Through fear alone 475
Of thee, and threatning Greece the Thebans arm,
To these inglorious Greeks my self repair'd
Their dying sense of honour to recall.
A few corrupted by the Persian gold,
Unjust dominion have usurp'd in Thebes. 480
These in each bosom quell the gen'rous flame
Of liberty. The eloquent they bribe;
With specious tales the multitude they cheat;
And prostitute the name of public good
To veil oppression. Others are immers'd 485
In all the sloth of riches, and unmov'd

In shameful ease behold their country fall. 1
I first implor'd their senate's instant aid,
But they with artful wiles demanding time
For consultation, I address'd them thus. 490

The shortest moment may suffice to know,
If to die free be better than to serve;
But if, deluding Greece by vain delays,
You mean to shew your friendship to the foe,
You cannot then deliberate too long, 495

How to withstand her swift-avenging wrath,
Approaching with Leonidas. This heard,
Four hundred warriours they appoint to march.
The wily Anaxander is their chief,
With Leontiades. I saw their march 500

Begun, then hasten'd to survey the straits,
Which thou shalt render sacred to renown.

Where, ever mingling with the crumbling soil,
Which moulders round the Malian bay, the sea
In slimy surges rolls; upon the rock, 505

Which forms the utmost limit of the bay,
Thermopylae is stretch'd. Where broadest spread,
It measures threescore paces, bounded here

By the deep ooze, which underneath presents
Its dreary surface; there the lofty cliffs 510

Of woody Oeta overlook the pass,
And far beyond o'er half the surge below
Their horrid umbrage cast. Across the straits
An ancient bulwark of the Phocians stands,
A wall with turrets crown'd. In station here 515
I found the Locrians, and from Thespia's gates
Sev'n hundred more Demophilus hath led.

His brother's son attends him to the camp,
Young Dithyrambus greatly fam'd in war,
But more for temperance of mind renown'd; 520
Lov'd by his country, and with honours grac'd,
His early bloom with brightest glory shines,
Nor wantons in the blaze. Here Agis spake.

Well hast thou painted that illustrious youth.
He was my host at Thespia. Though adorn'd 525
With highest deeds, by fame and fortune crown'd,
His gentle virtues take from Envy's mouth
Its blasting venom, and her baneful face
Strives on his worth to smile. In silence all
Again remain, and Alpheus thus pursues. 530

A chosen troop hath bold Platæa sent,
Small in its numbers, but unmatch'd in arms.

Above the rest Diomedon their chief
Excels in prowess. Signal were his deeds
Upon that day of glory, when the fields
Of Marathon were hid with Persian slain.

These guard Thermopylæ. Among the hills
A winding path to stranger's feet unknown
Affords another entrance into Greece;
This by a thousand Phocians is secur'd.

535

540

Here Alpheus paus'd. Leonidas embrac'd
The noble Spartan, and rejoin'd. Thou know'st
What fate to me th' immortal Gods ordain.

Frame now thy choice. Accompany our march,
Or go to Lacedæmon, and relate,
How thy discerning mind, and active limbs
Have serv'd thy country. From th' impatient mouth
Of Alpheus streight these fervent accents broke.

545

I HAVE not measur'd such a tract of land,
Not look'd unwearied on the setting sun,

550

And

And through the shade of midnight urg'd my steps
To rouse the Greeks to battle, that my self
Might be exempted from the glorious toil.

Return? Oh! no. A second time my feet
Shall visit thee, Thermopylæ, and there 555

With great Leonidas shall Alpheus find
An honourable grave. And oh! amid
His countr'ys danger if a Spartan breast
May feel a private sorrow, not alone

For injur'd Greece I hasten to revenge, 560
But for a brother's wrongs. A younger hope

Than I, or Maron bless'd our father's years,
Child of his age, and Polydorus nam'd.

His mind, while tender in its op'ning prime,
Was bent to rigid virtue. Gen'rous scorn 565

Of pain and danger taught his early strength
To struggle patient with severest toils.

Oft, when inclement winter chill'd the air,
And frozen show'rs had fwoln Eurotas' stream,

Amid th'impetuous channel would he plunge, 570
And breast the torrent. On a fatal day,

As in the sea his active limbs he bath'd,

A servile corsair of the Persian king
My brother, naked and defenceless, bore
Ev'n in my sight to Asia, there to waste 575
With all the promise of its growing worth
His youth in bondage. Never can my tongue
My pains recount, much less my father's woes,
The days he wept, the sleepless nights he beat
His aged bosom. And shall Alpheus' spear 580
Be absent from Thermopylae, nor claim,
O Polydorus, vengeance for thy bonds
In that first slaughter of the barb'rous foe?

HERE interpos'd Dieneces. The hands
Of Alpheus and Leonidas he grasp'd, 585
And joyful thus. Your glory wants no more,
Than that Lycurgus should himself arise
To praise the virtue, which his laws inspire.

Thus pass'd these heroes, till the dead of night,
The hours in friendly converse, and enjoy'd 590
Each other's virtue; happiest of men!
At length with gentle heaviness the hand

A
Of

Of sleep invades their eyelids. On the ground,
Oppress'd with slumber, they extend their limbs;
When, sliding down the hemisphere, the moon 595
Now plung'd in midnight gloom her silver head.

BOOK II

End of the first Book.

LEONI-

LEONIDAS.

BOOK II.

The Argument.

Leonidas on his approach to the Isthmus is met by the leaders of the troops sent from other Grecian states, and by the deputies, who compos'd the Isthmian council. He harangues them; then proceeds in conjunction with the other forces towards Thermopylæ, is join'd by Dithyrambus, and arrives at the straits about noon on the fourth day after his departure from the Isthmus. He is receiv'd at Thermopylæ by the Thespian commander Demophilus, and by Anaxander the Theban treacherously recommending Epialtes a Malian, who seeks by a pompous description of the Persian power to intimidate the Grecian leaders, as they are viewing the enemy's camp from the top of mount Oeta. He is answered by Dieneces and Diomedon. Xerxes sends

Tigranes

Tigranes and Phraortes to the Grecian camp, who are dismiss'd by Leonidas, and conducted back by Dithyrambus and Diomedon; which last, incens'd with the insolence of Tigranes, treats him with contempt and menaces. This occasions a challenge to single combat between Diomedon and Tigranes, Dithyrambus and Phraortes. Epialtes after a conference with Anaxander declares his intention of returning to Xerxes.

AURORA spread her purple beams around,
When mov'd the Spartans. Their approach
is known.

The Isthmian council, and the various chiefs,
Who led th' auxiliar bands, proceed to meet
Leonidas; Eupalamus the strong, 5
Alcmaeon, Clonius, Diophantus brave,
And Hegesander. At their head advanc'd
Aristobulus, whom Mycenæ's youth
Attend to war; Mycenæ once elate
With pow'r and dazzling wealth, and vaunting still
The name of Agamemnon, who along 11
The seas of Asia open'd to the wind
Unnumber'd sails, and darken'd half the shore

Of trembling Phrygia with the hostile shade.

Aristobulus join'd the Spartan king,

15

And thus began. Leonidas, survey

Mycenæ's race. Should ev'ry other Greek

Be aw'd by Xerxes, and his Asian host,

Believe not, we can fear, deriv'd from those,

Who once conducted o'er the foaming surge

20

The strength of Greece, who desart left the fields

Of ravag'd Asia, and her proudest walls

From their foundations humbled to the dust.

LEONIDAS replied not, but address'd

The chiefs around. Illustrious warriours, hail,

25

Who thus undaunted signalize your faith,

And gen'rous ardour in the common cause.

But you, whose counsels prop the Grecian state,

O venerable synod, whose decrees

Have call'd us forth to vanquish, or to die,

30

Thrice hail. Whate'er by valour we obtain

Your wisdom must preserve. With piercing eyes

Each Grecian state contemplate, and discern

Their various tempers. Some with partial care

To

To guard their own, neglect the public weal. 35

Cold and unmov'd are others. Terrour here,
And there corruption reigns. O fire the brave
With gen'rous zeal to quit their native walls,
And join their valour in the gen'ral cause ;
Confirm the wav'ring ; animate the cold, 40
And watch the faithless : some there are, betray
Themselves and Greece ; their perfidy prevent,
Or call them back to honour. Let us all
Be link'd in sacred union, and the Greeks
Shall stand the world's whole multitude in arms. 45
If for the spoil, which Paris bore to Troy,
A thousand barks the Hellespont o'erspread ;
Shall not again confederated Greece
Be rous'd to battle, and to freedom give,
What once she gave to fame. Behold we haste 50
To stop th'invading tyrant. Till we bleed,
He shall not pour his millions on your plains.
But, as the gods conceal, how long our strength
May stand unconquer'd, or how soon must fall,
Waste not a moment, till consenting Greece 55
Range all her free-born numbers in the field.

LEONIDAS concludes, when awful step'd
Before the sage assembly one, whose head
Was hoar with aged snow, and thus replied.

THY great example ev'ry heart unites.

60

From thee her happiest omens Greece derives
Of concord, freedom, victory, and fame.

Go then, O first of mortals, and impress
Amaze and terrour in the Persians breast;
The free-born Greeks instructing life to deem
Less dear than virtue, and their country's cause. 65

THIS heard, Leonidas, thy secret soul
Exulting tasted of the sweet reward
Due to thy name from endless time. His eyes
Once more he turn'd, and view'd in rapt'rous thought
His native land, which he alone can save; 71
Then summon'd all his majesty, and o'er
The Isthmus trod. Behind, the Grecians move
In deep arrangement. So th'imperial bark
With stately bulk along the beating tide
In military pomp conducts the pow'r 75

Of

Of some proud navy bounding from the port
To bear the vengeance of a mighty state
Against a tyrant's walls. The Grecians march
Till noon, when halting, as they take repast, 80
Upon the plain before them they descry
A troop of Thespians. One above the rest
In eminence precedes. His glitt'ring shield,
Whose spacious orb collects th'effulgent beams,
Which from his throne meridian Phœbus cast, 85
Flames like another sun. A snowy plume
Falls o'r his dazzling cask. In wanton curls,
Which floated in the breathing air, around
The lofty crest it wav'd. Approaching near
Beneath the honours of his radiant helm 90
The warriour now a countenance display'd,
Where youth in rosy prime with sweetnes mix'd
Its manly beauty. With such modest grace
Respectful near Leonidas he came,
As all ideas of his own desert 95
Were lost in veneration. Phœbus thus
Appears before his everlasting fire,
When from his altar in th'imbow'ring grove

Of palmy Delos, or the hallow'd bound
Of Tenedos, or Claros, where he hears 100
His hymns and praises from the sons of men,
He reascends the high Olympian seats;
Such reverential awe his brow invests,
Diffusing o'er the glowing flow'r of youth
New loveliness and grace. The king receives 105
Th' illustrious Thespian, and began. My tongue
Would call thee Dithyrambus, for thou bear'st
All in thy aspect to become that name
For valour known and virtue. O reveal 109
Thy birth and charge; whoe'er thou art, my soul
Desires to know thee, and would call thee friend.
To whom the youth return'd. O first of Greeks,
My name is Dithyrambus, which the lips
Of some benevolent and gen'rous friend
To thee have sounded with a partial voice., 115
And thou hast heard with favourable ears.
I come deputed by the Thespian chief,
The Theban, and the Locrian, and the brave
Diomedon, to hasten thy approach. 119
Three days will bring the Persian pow'rs in view.

He ceas'd. At once the standards are uprear'd,
The host till ev'ning with impetuous pace
Their march continue. Through the earliest dews
Of morning they proceed, and reach the pass,
E'er the fourth sun attain'd the sultry noon. 125
To their impatient sight no sooner rose
The rocks of Oeta, but with rapid feet,
And martial sounds of joy they rush'd along;
As if the present deity of fame,
With wreaths unfading on her temples bound, 130
And in her hand adamantine trump,
Had from the hills her radiant form disclos'd;
And bade their valour hasten to the field;
That she their acts beholding might resound 135
Their name and glory o'er the earth and seas. 135
Before the van Leonidas advanc'd,
His eye confess'd the ardour of his mind,
Which thus found utt'rance from his eager lips. 140

ALL hail! Thermopyla; and you, the pow'rs,
Which here preside. All hail! ye silvan Gods,
Ye fountain nymphs, who pour your lucid rills. 145

In broken murmurs down the rugged steep.

Receive us, O benignant, and support

The cause of Greece. Conceal the secret paths,

Which o'er the crags, and through the forests wind,

Untrod by human feet, and trac'd alone

146

By your immortal footsteps. O defend

Your own recesses, nor let impious war

Profane the solemn silence of your groves.

Thus on your hills your praises shall you hear 150

From those, whose deeds shall tell th' approving world,

That not to undeservers did you grant

Your high protection. You, my valiant friends,

Now rouse the gen'rous spirit, which inflames

Your hearts; now prove the vigour of your arms:

That your recorded actions may survive

156

Within the breasts of all the brave and free,

And sound delightful in the ear of Time,

As long as Neptune beats the Malian bay,

Or those tall cliffs erect their shaggy tops

160

So near to heav'n, your monuments of fame.

As in some torrid region, where the head

Of Ceres bends beneath its golden load,

If

If on the parching ground a fatal spark
Fall from a burning brand; the sudden blaze 165
Increas'd and aided by tumultuous winds
In rapid torrents of involving flames
Sweeps o'er the crackling plain, and mounting high
In ruddy spires illumines half the skies:
Not with less swiftness through the glowing ranks
The words of great Leonidas diffus'd 171
A more than mortal fervour. Ev'ry heart
Distends with great ideas, such as raise
The patriot's virtue, and the soldier's fire,
When danger in its most tremendous form 175
Seems to their eyes most lovely. In their thoughts
Imagination pictures all the scenes
Of war, the purple field, the heaps of death,
And glitt'ring trophies pil'd with Persian arms.

BUT now the Grecian leaders, who before 180
Were station'd near Thermopylæ, accost
The Spartan king. The Thespian chief allied
To Dithyrambus first the silence broke,
An ancient warriour. From behind his casque,

Whose crested weight his aged temples press'd, 185
 His slender hairs, which time had silver'd o'er,
 Flow'd venerable down. He thus began.

Joy now shall crown the period of my days,
 And whether with my father's dust I sleep,
 Or slain by Persia's sword I press the earth, 190
 Our common parent, be it as the gods
 Shall best determine. For the present hour
 I bless their bounty, which has giv'n my age
 To see the great Leonidas, and bid
 The hero welcome on this glorious shore; 195
 Where he, by heav'n selected from mankind,
 Shall fix the basis of the Grecian weal.

HERE too the wily Anaxander spake.
 Hail! glorious chief. Of all the Theban race
 We shall at least with gladsome bosoms meet 200
 The great defender of the Grecian cause.
 O! may oblivion o'er the shame of Thebes
 Its darkest wing extend, or they alone
 Be curs'd by fame, whose impious counsels turn
 Their countrymen from virtue. Thebes alas! 205

Still

Still had been buried in dishonest sloth,
Had not to wake her languor Alpheus come
The messenger of freedom. O accept
Our grateful hearts; thou, Alpheus, art the cause,
That Anaxander from his native gates 210
Here hath not borne a solitary spear,
Nor these inglorious in their walls remain'd
But longer do we loiter? Haste, my friends,
To yonder cliff, which points its shade afar,
And view the Persian camp. The morning sun 215
Beheld their numbers hide th'adjacent plains.
Lo! here a Malian, Epiates nam'd,
Who with the foe from Thracia's bounds hath
march'd. 220
He said. His seeming virtue all deceiv'd.
The camp not long had Epiates join'd,
By race a Malian. Eloquent his tongue,
But false his heart, and abject. He was skill'd
To grace perfidious counsels, and to cloath 225
In swelling phrase the baseness of his soul,
Foul nurse of treasons. To the tents of Greece,
Himself a Greek a faithless spy he came. 226
Soon

Soon to the friends of Xerxes he repair'd,
The Theban chiefs, and nightly consult held,
How best with consternation to deject
The Spartan valour, or how best betray. 230

With him the leaders climb the arduous hill,
From whence the dreadful prospect they command,
Where endless plains by white pavilions hid
Spread, like the vast Atlantic, when no shore,
No rock or promontory stops the sight 235
Unbounded, as it wanders; but the moon
Resplendent eye of night in fullest orb
Throughout th'interminated surface throws
Its rays abroad, and decks in snowy light
The dancing billows; such was Xerxes' camp:

A pow'r unrivall'd by the greatest king,
Or conqueror, that e'er with ruthless hands
Dissolving all the sacred ties, which bind
The happiness of nations, have alarm'd
The sleeping fury Discord from her den. 245

Not from the hundred brazen gates of Thebes,
The tow'rs of Memphis, and the pregnant fields
By Nile's prolifick torrents delug'd o'er,

E'er

I. Book II. L E O N I D A S. 45

E'er flow'd such armies with th' Egyptian lord
Renown'd Sesostris; who with trophies fill'd 250
The vanquish'd earth, and o'er the rapid foam
Of distant Tanaïs, and the huge expanse
Of trembling Ganges spread his dreaded name:
Nor yet in Asia's far extended bounds
E'er met such numbers, not when Belus drew 255
Th' Assyrian bands to conquest, or the pride
Of high-exalted Babylon survey'd
The plains along Euphrates cover'd wide
With armed myriads swarming from her walls;
When at the rage of dire Semiramis 260
Peace fled affrighted from the ravag'd East.
Yet all this hideous face of war dismay'd
No Grecian heart. Unterrified they stood.
Th' immeasurable camp with fearless eyes
They traverse, while in meditation near 265
The treach'rous Malian waits, collecting all
His pomp of words to paint the hostile pow'r;
Nor yet with falsehood arms his fraudulent tongue
To feign a tale of terror: Truth herself
Beyond the reach of fiction to enhance 270

Now

Now aids his treason, and with cold dismay
Might pierce the boldest breast, unless secur'd
By dauntless virtue, which disdains to live
From liberty divorc'd. Requested now 275
By ev'ry voice, the traitor spake, and all
Attentive ears incline. Oh! Greeks and friends!
Can I behold my native Malian fields
Presenting hostile millions to your fight,
And not with grief suppress the horrid tale,
Which you exact from these ill-omen'd lips. 280
On Thracia's sands I first beheld the foe,
When, joining Europe with the Asian shore,
A mighty bridge th'outragious waves restrain'd,
And stem'd th'impetuous current; while in arms
The universal progeny of men 285
Seem'd all before me trampling o'er the sea
By thousands and ten thousands: Persians, Medes,
Assyrians, Saces, Indians, swarthy files
From Æthiopia, Ægypt's tawny sons,
Arabians, Bactrians, Parthians, all the strength 290
Of Libya and of Asia. Neptune groan'd
Beneath the burthen, and indignant heav'd

His neck against th' incumbent weight. In vain
The violence of Boreas and the East,
With rage combin'd, against th'unshaken pile 295
Dash'd half the Hellespont. The eastern world
Sev'n days and nights uninterrupted pass,
And pour on Thracia's confines. They accept
The Persian lord, and range their hardy race
Beneath his standards. Macedonia's youth 300
With all Thessalia next, and ev'ry Greek,
Who dwells beyond Thermopylae, attend.
Thus not alone embodied Asia lifts
Her threatening lance, but Macedon and Thrace;
Whose martial loins with daring warriours teem,
And faithless Greeks in multitudes untold 306
The Persian monarch aid. Celestial pow'rs!
And thou, who reignest over men and gods,
Who in a moment by thy will supreme
Canst quell the mighty in their proudest hopes, 310
And raise the weak to safety, thou impart
Thy instant succour; interpose thy arm;
With lightning blast their legions: Oh! confound
With triple-bolted thunder Persia's camp,

Whence

Whence like an inundation with the morn 315
Shall millions rush, and overwhelm the Greeks.
Resistance else were vain against an host,
Which covers all Thessalia; for beyond
The Malian plains thus widely stretch'd below,
Beyond the utmost measure of the sight 320
Bent from the height of this aspiring cliff,
Lie yet more hideous numbers, which might drain
The streams of copious rivers with their thirst,
And with their arrows hide the mid-day sun.

THEN shall we join our battle in the shade, 325
Dieneces replied. Not calmly thus
Diomedon. On Xerxes' camp he bends
His low'ring brow, which frowns had furrow'd o'er,
And thus exclaim'd. Bellona, turn and view
With joyful eyes that field, the fatal stage, 330
Which regal madness hath for you prepar'd
To exercise your horrors. Thou, O Death,
Shalt riot here unceasing, when the rocks
Of yonder pass with bleeding ranks are strew'd;
And all, who shun th' avenging steel of Greece, 335

By

By pestilence and meager famine seiz'd,
Shall with variety of ruin feast
Thy unabated hunger. Thus he spake,
While on the host immense his gloomy eyes
He fix'd disdainful, and its strength defied. 340

MEANTIME within th' entrenchment of the
Greeks

From Asia's monarch delegated came
Tigranes and Phraortes, From the hills
Leonidas conducts th' impatient chiefs.
Around the hero in his tent they throng, 345
When thus Tigranes their attention calls,

AMBASSADORS from Persia's king we stand
Before you, Grecians. To display the pow'r
Of our great master were a needless task.
The name of Xerxes, Asia's mighty lord, 350
Invincible, and seated on a throne
Surpassing human lustre, must have reach'd
Th' extremest border of the earth, and taught
The hearts of men to own resistless force

With awe, and low submission. Yet I swear 355
By yon resplendent orb, which flames above,
The glorious symbol of th' eternal pow'r,
This military throng, this shew of war
Persuade me, you have never heard that name,
At whose dread sound the billows wide remote 360
Of Indus tremble, and the Caspian wave,
Th' Egyptian tide, and Hellepontic surge
With homage roll. O impotent and rash!
Whom yet the large beneficence of heav'n,
And our great monarch merciful and kind 365
Deign to preserve. Resign your arms; disperse
Each to your cities; there with humblest hands
Before your lord bestrew the way with flow'rs.

As through th'extensive grove, whose leafy boughs
Intwining crown some eminence with shade, 370
The tempests rush sonorous, and between
The crashing branches roar; by fierce disdain
And indignation thus the Grecians mov'd
With clam'rous murmurs close the Persian's speech.
But Sparta's king arising, all is hush'd. 375
In sudden silence; when he thus replied.

O PERSIAN, when to Xerxes thou return'st,
Say, thou hast told the wonders of his pow'r;
Then say, thou saw'st a slender band of Greece,
Which dares his boasted millions to the field. 380

THE Spartan said. Th' Ambassadors retire.
Them o'er the limits of the Grecian lines
Diomedon and Thespia's youth conduct.
With slow solemnity they all proceed
In full silence. But their looks denote 385
What speech would shame and weaken. Wrath
contracts
The forehead of Diomedon. His teeth
Gnash with impatience for delay'd revenge.
Disdain, which sprung from conscious merit, flush'd
The cheek of Dithyrambus. On the face 390
Of either Persian insolence and pride,
Incens'd by disappointment, gloomy low'r'd.
But when they reach'd the limits of the straits,
Where Xerxes' camp began to open wide
Its deep, immense arrangement; then the heart 395
Of vain Tigranes, swelling at the sight,
Thus overflows in loud and haughty phrase.

O ARIMANIUS, origin of ill,
Have we demanded of thy ruthless pow'r
Thus with the curse of madness to afflict 400
These wretched men? But since thy dreadful will
To irresistible perdition dooms
The sons of Greece, in vain should we oppose.
Be thy dire will accomplish'd, let them fall,
And fatten with their blood their native soil. 405.

ENRAG'D the stern Diomedon replies.
Thou servile, base dependent on a king,
Inglorious mercenary, slave to those,
Whom most we scorn, thou boaster, dost thou know,
That I beheld the Marathonian field; 410
When, like the Libyan sands before the wind,
Your host was scatter'd by th'unconquer'd Greeks;
Where thou perhaps didst turn before this arm
To ignominious flight thy shiv'ring limbs?
O may I find thee in to-morrow's fight! 415
Then on this rocky pavement shalt thou lie
Beneath this arm to feast the vulture's beak.

He ended here, and thus the Persian chief.
O thou, whose hand omnipotent protects
The throne of Xerxes, bend thy sacred ear! 420
For lo! my first victorious fruits of war
To thee I here devote, the gory spoils,
Which from this Grecian with the rising dawn
In sight of either host my arm shall rend.

PARAORTES interrupting then began. 425
I too would find among the Grecian chiefs
One, who in battle dare abide my spear.

To him thus answer'd Thespia's gallant youth.
Thou look'st on me, O Persian. Worthier far
Thou might'st indeed have singled from our host,
But none more willing to essay thy force. 431
Yes, I will prove before the eye of Mars,
How far the valour of the meanest Greek
Beyond thy vaunts deserves the palm of fame.

THIS said, the Persians to their king repair, 435
Back to their camp the Grecians. There they found

Each soldier poising his extended spear,
And his large buckler bracing on his arm,
For instant war prepar'd. Through all the files
Each leader moves exulting, and with praise 440
And exhortations aids their native warmth.
Alone the Theban Anaxander pin'd,
Who thus apart address'd his Malian friend.

WHAT has thy lofty eloquence avail'd,
Alas ! in vain attempting to confound 445
The Spartan valour ? With redoubled fires
See how their bosoms glow. They wish to die,
And wait impatient for th' unequal fight.
Too soon will come th' insuperable foes,
And in promiscuous ruin all be whelm'd ; 450
Nor shall our merit to the Persian lord
Be told, or known: for whose advent'rous feet
To serve the Thebans, through the guarded pass,
The Grecian watch eluding, will approach
The tents of Asia, that the king may know, 455
And spare his friends amid the gen'ral wreck ;
When his high-swoln resentment, like a flood

Increas'd

Increas'd with stormy show'rs, I shall cover Greece
With desolation? Epialtes here.

WHENCE, Anaxander, this unjust despair? 460
Is there a path on Oeta's hills unknown
To Epialtes? O'er the trackless rock,
And mazy grove shall pass my secret steps.
This night I part. Thy merit shall be told
To Persia's king. Thou only watch the hour, 465
Nor then be tardy, when he wants thy aid.

End of the second Book.

LEONIDAS.

BOOK III.

The Argument.

Tigranes and Phraortes repair to Xerxes, whom they find seated on a throne surrounded by his satraps in a magnificent pavilion; while the Magi stand before him, and sing an hymn containing the religion of Zoroastres. Xerxes, notwithstanding the arguments of his brothers Hyperanthes and Abrocomes, gives no credit to the ambassadors, who report, that the Grecians are determin'd to maintain the pass against him; but commands Demaratus an exil'd king of Sparta to attend him, and ascends his chariot to take a view of the Grecians himself. He passes through the midst of his army consisting of many nations differing in arms, customs, and manners. He advances to the entrance of the straits, and surpris'd at the behaviour of the Spartans demands

mands the reason of it from Demaratus; which occasions a conversation between them on the mercenary forces of Persia, and the militia of Greece. Demaratus weeping at the sight of his countrymen, is comforted by Hyperanthes. Xerxes still incredulous commands Tigranes and Phraortes to bring the Greeks bound before him the next day, and retires to his pavilion.

NOW had Tigranes and Phraortes gain'd
The splendid tent of Xerxes. Him they
found
Bigirt with princes, and illustrious chiefs,
The potentates of Asia. Near his side
His valiant brothers stood, Abrocomes, 5
And Hyperanthes, then Pharnuchus brave,
Pandates, Intaphernes, mighty lords,
And numbers more in purple splendour clad,
With homage all attending round the throne,
Whose gorgeous seat erected high upbore 10
Their regal master. He above their heads
Look'd down imperious. So the stately tow'r
Of Belus, mingling its majestick front

With heav'n's bright azure, from on high survey'd
The huge extent of Babylon with all 15
Its sumptuous domes and palaces beneath.
That day the monarch deem'd to enter Greece,
And hide her fields with war; but first ordains,
That grateful hymns should celebrate the name
Of Oromasdes: so the Persians call'd 20
The world's great author. By the king's decree
The Magi stood before th'unfolded tent.
Fire blaz'd beside them. Tow'rds the sacred flame
They turn'd, and sent their tuneful praise to heav'n.

FROM Zoroastres was the song deriv'd, 25
Who on the hills of Persia from his cave
With flow'rs incircled, and with murmur'ring founts,
That cheer'd the solemn mansion, had reveal'd,
How Oromasdes, radiant source of good,
Original, immortal fram'd the globe 30
With all its varied beauty: how with stars
By him the heav'ns were spangled: how the sun,
Refulgent Mithra, purest spring of light,
And genial warmth, whence fruitful nature smiles,

Burst

Burst from the east at his creating voice; 35

When streight beyond the golden verge of day

Night shew'd the horrors of her distant reign,

Whence black, and hateful Arimanus sprung,

The author foul of evil: he with shades

From his dire mansion veil'd the earth and skies, 40

Or to destruction chang'd the solar beam,

When parching fields deny the foodful grain,

And from their channels fly th'exhaling streams,

Whence pestilence, and famine: how the pow'r

Of Oromasdes in the human breast 45

Benevolence, and equity infus'd,

Truth, temperance, and wisdom sprung from heav'n;

When Arimanus blacken'd all the soul

With falsehood, and injustice, with desires

Insatiable, with violence, and rage, 50

Malignity, and folly. If the hand

Of Oromasdes on precarious life

Shed wealth and pleasure, soon th'infernal god

With wild excess, or av'rice blasts the joy.

Thou, Oromasdes, victory dost give. 55

By thee with fame the regal head is crown'd.

Great Xerxes owns thy succour. When with storms
The hate of direful Arimanus swell'd
The Hellespont, thou o'er the angry surge
The destin'd master of the world didst lead 60
This day his promis'd glories to enjoy,
When Greece affrighted to his arms shall bend
Ev'n as at last shall Arimanus fall
Before thy might, and evil be no more.

THE Magi ceas'd their harmony; when now
Before the king with adoration bow'd 66
Tigranes and Phraortes. Prone they lay,
And o'er their foreheads spread their abject hands,
As from a present deity too bright
For mortal vision to conceal their eyes. 70
At length in humble phrase Tigranes thus.

O XERXES, live for ever! Gracious lord!
Who dost permit thy servants to approach
Thy awful sight, and prostrate thus to own
Thy majesty and greatness. May the pow'r 75
Of Oromasdes stretch thy scepter'd arm
O'er

O'er all the nations from the Indian shores,
Ev'n to the waters of the western main,
From northern Tanaïs to the source of Nile!

And still from thee may Arimanus turn 80
Against thy foes his malice to mankind!

By him, ev'n now with frenzy smote, the Greeks
Reject thy proffer'd clemency. The morn
Shall see them bleed the victims of thy wrath

HERE, to his brothers turning, Xerxes spake. 85
Say, Hyperanthes? Does thy soul believe
These tydings? Sure these slaves have never dar'd
To face the Grecians, but delude our ear
With base impostures, which their fears suggest.

To him this answser Hyperanthes form'd. 90
O from his servants may the king avert
His indignation! Greece was fam'd of old
For martial virtue, and intrepid sons:
I have effay'd their valour, and with me
Abrocomes can witness. When our fire, 95
The great Darius, to th' Athenian shore
With

With Artaphernes, and with Datis sent
Our tender youth; at Marathon we found,
How vain the hopes, that numbers should dismay
A foe resolv'd on victory, or death. 100
Yet not as one contemptible, or base
Let me appear before thee: though the Greeks
With such unconquer'd spirits be indu'd,
Soon as the king shall summon me to war,
He shall behold me in the dang'rous van 105
Exalt my spear, and pierce the hostile ranks,
Or sink before them: Xerxes then return'd.

Why over Asia, and the Libyan foil,
With all their nations does my potent arm
Extend its scepter? Wherefore do I sweep 110
Across the globe with millions in my train?
Why shade the Ocean with unnumber'd sails?
Whence all this pow'r, unless th'eternal will
Had doom'd to give one master to the wold,
And that the earth's extremity alone 115
Should bound my empire? He for this reduc'd
Revolted Ægypt, and inlarg'd my sway
With

With sandy Libya, and the sultry clime
Of Æthiopia. He for this subdu'd
The Hellepontic rage, and taught the sea 120
Obedience to my pow'r. Then cease to think,
That heav'n deserting now the cause of kings
Those despicable Grecians will inspire
With courage more than human, and expunge
The common fears of nature from their breasts.
He ceas'd, when thus Abrocomes began. 126

THE king commands us to reveal our hearts:
Then may the sun to lightning change his beams,
And blast my head with ruin; may the king 130
Look on his servant with a loathing eye,
If what I here affirm be false, or vain,
That yonder Grecians will oppose our course.

THE king arose. No more: prepare my car;
The Spartan exile Demaratus call:
We will our selves advance and view the foe. 135

THE monarch will'd; and suddenly he hears
His trampling horses. High on silver wheels

The

The iv'ry car with azure sapphirs shone,
Cærulean beryls, and the jasper green,
The emerald, the ruby's glowing blush, 140
The flaming topaz with its golden beam,
The pearl, th'impurpled amethyst, and all
The various gems, which India's mines afford
To deck the pomp of kings. In burnish'd gold
A sculptur'd eagle from behind displays 145
Its stately neck, and o'er the monarch's head
Extends its dazzling wings. Eight gen'rous steeds,
Which on the fam'd Nysæan plain were nurs'd
In wintry Media, drew the radiant car.
Not those of old to Hercules refus'd 150
By false Laomedon, nor they, which bore
The son of Thetis through the scatter'd rear
Of Troy's devoted race, might these surpass
In strength, or beauty. With obedient pride
They heard their lord: exulting in the air 155
They toss'd their foreheads, while the silver manes
Smote on their glitt'ring necks. The king ascends;
Beside his footstool Demaratus sat.
The charioteer now shakes the golden reins,

Strong Patirampes. At the signal bound 160
Th' attentive steeds; the chariot flew; behind
Ten thousand horse in thunder swept the field.
The eastern bands (so Xerxes had ordain'd)
Between the sea-beat margin, and the camp
All wait imbattled, all prepar'd to pass 165
Thermopylæ. To these with rapid wheels
Th' imperial car proceeds. Th' approaching king
Soon through the wide battalions is proclaim'd.
He now draws nigh. Th' innumerable host
Roll back by nations, and admit their lord 170
With all his satraps. From his crystal dome
Rais'd on the bottom of the watry world
Thus when the potent ruler of the floods
With each cærulean deity ascends,
Thron'd on his pearly chariot; all the deep 175
Divides its bosom to th' emerging god.
So Xerxes rode between the Asian world
On either side receding; when, as down
Th' immeasurable ranks his sight was lost,
A momentary gloom o'er cast his mind, 180
While this reflection fill'd his eyes with tears:

That soon, as Time an hundred years had told,
Not one of all those thousands should survive.

Whence to obscure thy pride arose that cloud?

Was it, that once humanity could touch

185

A tyrant's breast? or rather did thy foal

Repine, O Xerxes, at the bitter thought,

That all thy pow'r was mortal? But the veil

Of sadness soon forsook his brightning eyes,

As with adoring homage millions bow'd,

190

And to his heart relentless pride recall'd.

Elate the mingled prospect he surveys

Of glitt'ring files unnum'ber'd, chariots scyth'd

On thundring axles roll'd with haughty steeds

In sumptuous trappings clad (Barbaric pomp)

195

Which tore with spurning hoofs the sandy beach;

While ev'ry banner to the sun expands

Its gorgeous folds, that beam'd with gold, with shields,

Tiaras, helms environ'd, and with spears

In number equal to the bladed grafs,

200

Whose living green in vernal beauty cloaths

Thessalia's vale. What pow'rs of sounding verse

Can to the mind present th'amazing scene?

Not

Not thee, whom Rumour's fabling voice delights,
Poetic Fancy, to my aid I call; 205
But thou, historic Truth, support my song,
Which shall the various multitude display,
Their arms, their manners, and their native seats.

THE Persians first in scaly corselets shone

With colours varying on the gorgeous sleeves, 210
A gen'rous nation. From their infant age
Their tongues were practic'd in the love of truth,
Their limbs inur'd to ev'ry manly toil,
To brace the bow, to rule th'impetuous steed,
And dart the javelin; worthy to enjoy 215
The liberty, their injur'd fathers lost,
Whose arms for Cyrus overturn'd the strength
Of Babylon and Sardis, and advanc'd
The victors head above his country's laws.
Such were the Persians; but, untaught to form 220
The ranks of battle, with unequal force
Against the phalanx of the Greeks they stood,
And to the massy shield, and weighty spear
A target light, and slender lance oppos'd.

On ev'ry head tiaras rose, like tow'rs, 225

Impenetrable. All with burnish'd gold

Blaz'd their gay sandals, and the floating reins

Of each proud courser. Daggers from their thighs

A well-stor'd quiver from their shoulders hung,

And strongest bows of mighty size they bore. 230

Next, with resembling arms the Medes are seen,

The Cissians, and Hircanians. Media once

From her bleak mountains aw'd the subject East.

Her kings in cold Ecbatana were thron'd.

The Cissians march'd from Susa's regal walls, 235

From sultry fields o'erspread with branching palms,

And white with lillies, water'd by the tides

Of fam'd Choaspes, whose transparent waves

The golden goblet wafts to Persia's kings :

No other stream the royal lip bedews. 240

Hyrcania's race forsook their fruitful clime

Dark with the verdure of expanding oaks,

To Ceres dear and Bacchus. There the corn

Bent by its golden burthen sheds unreap'd

Its plenteous feed impregnating the soil 245

With future harvests ; while the bees reside

Among

Among th'intwining branches of the groves,
Where with their labours they enrich the leaves,
Which flow with sweetness. Next, Assyria's sons
Their brazen helms display, th'unskilful work 250
Of rude Barbarians. Thick-wove flax defends
Their chest and loins. A buckler guards their arm.
Girt with a falchion each a mace sustains
O'erlaid with iron. On Euphrates' banks
In Babylon's stupendous walls they dwell, 255
And o'er the plains, where once with mightier tow'rs
Old Ninus rear'd its head, th'imperial seat
Of eldest tyrants. These Chaldæa joins,
The land of shepherds. On the pastures wide
There Belus first discern'd the various course 260
Of heav'n's bright planets, and the clust'ring stars
With names distinguish'd, whence himself was
deem'd

The chief of gods. His heav'n-ascending fane
In Babylon the proud Assyrians rais'd.
Drawn from the fertile soil, which Ochus laves, 265
The Bactrians stood, like Persia's bands attir'd,
Though less their javelins, and their bows of cane;

The Paricanians next all rough with hides
Of shaggy goats, with bows and daggers arm'd.
Alike in horrid garb the Caspian train 270
From barren mountains, and the dreary coast,
Which bounds the stormy lake, that bears their name,
With cany bows, and scymetars were led.
The Indians then, a threefold band, appear'd.
Part guide the horse, and part the rapid car; 275
The rest on foot within the bending cane
For slaughter held their iron-pointed reeds.
These o'er the Indus from the distant floods
Of Ganges pass'd, and left a region lov'd
By lavish nature. There the plenteous year 280
Twice crown'd with harvests smiles. The honey'd
shrub,
The cinnamon, and spikenard bless their fields.
Array'd in native wealth the warriours shone.
Their ears were grac'd with pendants, and their hands
Incircled wore a bracelet starr'd with gems. 285
These were the nations, who to Xerxes sent
Their mingled aids of infantry and horse.

Now,

Now, Muse, recount what numbers yet untold
On foot obscur'd the surface of the shore;
Or who in chariots, or on camels beat 290
The loosen'd sand. The Parthians first advance,
Then weak in numbers o'er the Malian strand
Far from their lonely vales, and woody hills,
Not yet renown'd for warlike steeds, they trod.
With them the Sogdians, Dadices arrang'd, 295
Gandarians, and Chorasmians, all attir'd,
Like Bactria's sons. To these the Saces join,
From cold Imaüs drawn, from Oxus' waves,
And Cyra built on Iäxartes' brink,
The bound of Persia's Empire. Wild, untam'd, 300
And prone to rage, their defarts they forsook.
A bow, a falchion, and a pond'rous ax
The savage legions arm'd. A pointed cask
O'er each grim visage rear'd its iron cone.
In arms, like Persians, the Saranges stood. 305
High as the knee their buskins stretch'd, and clung
Around their ham. With glowing colours dy'd
Gay shone their varied garments. Next are seen
The Pactyan, Mycian, and the Utian train

In skins of goats, all horrid. Bows they wield 310
Of springy reed, with poniards at their sides.
With spotted hides of leopards all array'd,
Or with the spoil from tawny lions torn
In graceful range the Æthiopians stand
Of equal stature, and a beauteous frame; 315
Though scorching Phœbus had imbrown'd their face,
And curl'd their crisped locks. In ancient song
Renown'd for justice, riches they disdain'd,
As foes to virtue. From their seat remote
On Nilus' verge above th' Ægyptian bound, 320
Forc'd by their king's malignity and pride
These friends of hospitality and peace,
Themselves uninjur'd, wag'd reluctant war
Against a land, whose climate, and whose name
To them were strange. With hardest stone they point
The rapid arrow. Bows of hideous length, 326
Form'd with th' elastic branches of the palm,
They bore, and lances arm'd with horns of goats,
And maces strong with iron. Now, O Muse,
Recite the nations, who in helmets fram'd 330
Of various parts, and close-connected joints,

With

With darts, and poniards, shields, and lances weak,
A feeble train, attend their tyrant's will,
All victims destin'd to imbrue with gore
The Grecian spears; the Paphlagonians first 335
From where Carambis with projected brows
O'erlooks the dusky Euxine wrapt in mists,
And where through flow'rs, that paint its various
 banks,

Parthenius flows, the Mariandynians next,
The Matienian, and the Ligyan bands. 340

With them the Syrian multitudes, who dwell
Near Daphne's grove, who cultivate the glebe
Wide-water'd by Orontes, who along
Th' extended ridge of Libanus are nurs'd
Among the cedars, or with foodful dates 345
Pluckt from the palms, whose fruitage grac'd the
 plains

Around Damascus: all, who bear the name
Of Cappadocians, swell the Syrian host,
With those, who gather from the fragrant shrub
The aromatic balsam, and extract 350
Its milky juice along the lovely side

Of winding Jordan, till immers'd it sleep
Beneath the pitchy surface, which obscures
Th' Asphaltic lake. The Phrygians then advance.

To them their ancient colony is join'd, 355
Th' Armenian bands. These see the bursting springs
Of strong Euphrates cleave the yielding earth,
And wide in lakes expanding hide the plain.
Thence with collected waters fierce and deep
Its passage rending through diminish'd rocks 360
To Babylon it foams. Not so the wave
Of soft Araxes to the Caspian glides.
But, stealing imperceptibly, it laves
The fruitful herbage of Armenia's meads.

Next, strange to view, in similar attire, 365
Though far unlike in manners to the Greeks,
Appear the Lydians. Wantonness and sport
Were all their care. Beside Cayster's stream,
Or smooth Mæander winding silent by,
Or near Pactolus' wave among the vines 370
Of Tmolus rising, or the wealthy tide
Of golden-sanded Hermus they allure
The sight enchanted with the graceful dance,

Or

Or with melodious sweetness charm the air,
And melt to softest languishment the soul. 375

What to the battle's danger could incite
These tender sons of luxury? The lash
Of their stern monarch urg'd their shiv'ring limbs
Through all the tempests, which enrag'd the main,
And shook beneath their trembling steps the pile,
That join'd the Asian and the western worlds. 381

To these Mæonia hot with sulph'rous mines
Unites her troops. No tree adorns their fields
Unbless'd with verdure, and with ashes strown.
Black are the rocks, and ev'ry hill deform'd 385

With conflagration. Helmets press'd their brows.
Two darts they brandish'd. Round their woolly vest
A sword was girt, and hairy hides compos'd
Their bucklers round and light. The Mysians left

Olympus wood-envelop'd, and the soil 390
Wash'd by Caicus, and the baneful tide
Of Lycus, nurse of serpents. Targets, helms,
And wooden javelins harden'd in the flames
They bore. By these, imbattled next are seen
An ancient nation, who in early times, 395

By

By Trojan arms assai'd, their native land
Esteem'd less dear than freedom, and exchang'd
Their seat on Strymon, where in Thrace it pours
Its freezing current, for the distant shores
Of fishy Sangar. These Bythynians nam'd 400
Their habitations to the sacred feet
Of Dindymus extend. Yet there they groan'd
Beneath oppression, and their freedom mourn'd
On Sangar now, as once on Strymon lost.
The ruddy skins of foxes form'd their cask; 405
Their shields were fashion'd like the horned moon;
A dart, and slender poniard arm'd their hands;
A vest embrac'd their bodies, while abroad
Ting'd with unnumber'd hues a mantle flow'd.
But other Thracians, who their former name 410
Retain'd in Asia, stood with shining helms.
The horns of bulls in imitating bras
Adorn'd the lofty crest. Phænician cloth
Their legs infolds, with brightest purple stain'd;
And through the forest wont to chase the boar, 415
A hunter's spear they grasp. — What nations still
On either side of Xerxes, while he pass'd,

Present their huge array, and swell his soul
With more than mortal pride? The num'rous train
Of Moschians and Macronians now succeed, 420
And Mosynæcians, who, with berries fed,
In wooden tow'rs along the Pontic shore
Repose their painted limbs; the mirthful race
Of Tibarenians next, whose wanton minds
Delight in sport, and laughter: all in casks 425
Of wood, with shields, and lances small, whose points
Beyond proportion lengthen. Then approach,
In garments o'er their spacious bosom clasp'd,
And part with javelins, part with Lycian bows,
A people destin'd in eternal verse, 430
Ev'n thine, sublime Mæonides, to live.
These are the Milyans, Solymi their name
In thy celestial strains, Pisidia's hills
Their dwelling. Once, a formidable train,
They fac'd the great Bellerophon in war, 435
Now doom'd a more tremendous foe to meet,
Themselves unnerv'd with bondage, and to leave
Their putrid bodies for the dogs of Greece.
Next are the Marian legions furnish'd all

With

With shields of skins, with darts, and helmets wove
Of strongest texture. Aria's host pretend 441
The Bactrian lance, and brace the Persian bow,
Drawn from a region horrid all with thorn,
One hideous waste of sands, which mock the toil
Of patient culture; save one favour'd spot, 445
Which, like an isle, emerges from the wild,
In verdure clad, and interspers'd with vines,
Whose gen'rous clusters yield a juice, that scorns
The injuries of time. Yet nature's hand
Had sown their rocks with coral, and enrich'd 450
Their desart hills with veins of sapphirs blue,
And those, whose azure sparks of gold adorn.
These from the turbant flame. On ev'ry neck
The coral blushes through the num'rous throng.
The Allarodians, and Sasperian bands 455
Were arm'd with poniards like the Cholchian host;
Their heads were guarded with a helm of wood.
Short were their spears, of hides undres'd their shields.
The Cholchians march'd from Phasis, and the shores,
Where once Medea, fair enchantress, stood, 460
And wondring view'd the first advent'rous bark,

That

Book III. L E O N I D A S. 79

That stem'd the Pontic foam. From Argo's side
The demigods descended, and repair'd
To her fell fire's inhospitable walls.

His blooming graces Jason there display'd. 465

With ev'ry art of eloquence divine
He claim'd the golden fleece. The virgin heard,
She gaz'd with fatal ravishment, and lov'd.

Then to the hero she resigns her heart;
Her magic tames the brazen-footed bulls; 470

She lulls the sleepless dragon, and to Greece
With faithless Jason wafts the radiant prize.

The Cholchians then pursu'd their steps with war,
And now with ancient enmity inflam'd,

Or else compell'd by Xerxes to recal 475

The long-forgotten wrong, they menace Greece
With desolation. Next in Persian guise

A croud advanc'd, who left the various isles
In Persia's gulph, and round Arabia known.

Some in their native topaz were adorn'd, 480

From Ophiodes, and Topazos sprung;
And some with shells of tortoises, which brood
Around Casitis' verge. To them were join'd

These,

Those, who reside, where Erythras intomb'd
Lies all beset with palms, a pow'rful king, 485
Who nam'd of old the Erythræan main.

The Lybians next are plac'd. In chariots scyth'd
They sat terrific, cloath'd in skins, with darts
Of wood well-temper'd in the hardning flames.
Not Lybia's desarts from tyrannic sway 490
Could hide her sons; much less could freedom
dwell

Amid the plenty of Arabia's fields:
Where spicy cassia, and the fragrant reed,
And myrrh, and hallow'd frankincense perfume
The zephir's wing. A bow of largest size 495
Th' Arabians wield, and o'er their lucid vest
Loose floats a mantle on their shoulder clasp'd.
Of these two myriads on the lofty back
Of camels rode, that match'd the swiftest horse.

Such were the numbers, which from Afia led
Bow'd down with low prostration to the wheels 501
Of Xerxes' chariot. Yet what legions more
Expand their mighty range? What banners still

The Malian sands o'ershadow ? Forward rolls
The regal car through nations, which in arms, 505
And order'd ranks unlike the eastern throng
Upheld the spear and buckler. Yet untaught
To bend the servile knee erect they stood ;
Unless that mourning o'er the shameful weight 509
Of their new bondage some their brows depreſſ'd,
And stain'd their arms with sorrow. Europe's race
Were these, whom Xerxes by resistless force
Had gather'd to his standards. Murm'ring here
The sons of Thrace and Macedonia stood,
Here on his steed the brave Theſſalian frown'd: 515
There pin'd reluctant multitudes, who bore
The name of Greeks, and peopled all the coast
Between Byzantium, and the Malian bay.

THROUGH all the numbers, which ador'd his
pride,

Or fear'd his pow'r, the monarch now was pass'd;
Nor yet among those myriads could be found 521
One, who with Xerxes' self in tow'ring size,
Or beauteous features might compare, possess'd

Of all but virtue; doom'd to shew how mean,
How weak without her is unbounded pow'r, 525
The charm of beauty, and the blaze of state,
How insecure of happiness, how vain.

Thou, who couldst mourn the common lot, which
heav'n

From none withholds; which oft to thousands proves
Their only refuge from a tyrant's rage; 530
And which by pining sickness, age, or pain
Becomes at last a soothing hope to all;
Thou, who couldst weep, that nature's gentle hand
Should lay her wearied offspring in the tomb,
Yet couldst remorseless from their peaceful seats 535
Lead half the nations in a clime unknown
To fall the victims of thy ruthless pride;
What didst thou merit from the injur'd world?
What suff'ring's to compensate for the tears
Of Asia's mothers, for unpeopled realms, 540
And all this waste of nature? On his host
The king exulting bends his haughty sight,
When thus to Demaratus he began.

Now, Demaratus, to thy soul recal
My father, great Darius, who receiv'd 545
Thy wandering steps expell'd their native home.
Ill would it then become thee to beguile
Thy benefactors, and the truth disguise.
Look back on all those thousands, and declare,
If yonder Grecians will oppose their march. 550

THE exile answer'd. Deem not, mighty lord,
I will deceive thy goodness by a tale
Forg'd for their glory, whose deluded minds
Perversely hearken'd to the fland'r'r's tongue;
Who forc'd me with unmerited disgrace 555
To tread the paths of banishment and woe.
Nor be the king offended, while I speak
The words of truth. The Spartans never fly.

HERE with contemptuous smiles the kings return'd.
Wilt thou, who once wert Lacedæmon's chief, 560
Encounter twenty Persians? Yet those Greeks
With greater disproportion must confront
Our host to morrow. Demaratus thus.

By single combat were the tryal vain,
And vainer still by my unworthy sword, 565
To prove the merit of united force,
Which oft by military skill surmounts
The strength of numbers. Nor in fields of war
The Greeks excel by discipline alone, 569
But from their manners. Grant thy ear, O king,
The diff'rence learn of Grecian bands, and thine.
The flow'r, the bulwark of thy pow'rful host
Are mercenaries. These are canton'd round
Thy provinces. No fertile field demands
Their painful hand to turn the fallow glebe. 575
Them to the noon-day toil no harvest calls.
The stubborn oak along the mountains brow
Sinks not beneath their stroke. With careful eyes
They mark not how the flocks, or heifers feed.
To them, of wealth and all possessions void, 580
The name of country with an empty sound
Flies o'er the ear, nor warms their joyless hearts,
Who share no country. Needy, yet with scorn
Rejecting labour, wretched by their wants,
Yet profligate through indolence, with limbs 585

Soft and enervate, and with minds corrupt;
From misery, debauchery, and sloth
Are these to battle drawn against a foe
Inur'd to hardship, and the child of toil,
Wont through the freezing shov'r, and wintry storm
O'er his own glebe the tardy ox to goad; 591
Or in the sun's impetuous heat to glow
Beneath the burden of the yellow sheaves:
Whence on himself, on her, whose faithful arms
Infold him joyful, and a num'rous race, 595
Which glads his dwelling, plenty he bestows
With independence; and when call'd to war
For these his dearest comfort, and his care,
And for the harvest promis'd to his toil,
He lifts the shield, nor shuns unequal force. 600
Such are the pow'rs of ev'ry state in Greece,
One only breeds a race more warlike still,
Ev'n those, who now defend that rocky pass,
The sons of Lacedæmon. They untaught
To break the glebe, or bind the golden sheaves, 605
To far severer labours are inur'd,
Alone for war, their sole delight, and care.

From infancy to manhood are they form'd
To want, and danger, to th'unwholesome ground,
To winter watches, and inclement skies, 610
To plunge through torrents, brave the tusky boar,
To arms, and wounds; an exercise of pain
So fierce and constant, that to them a camp
With all its hardships is the seat of rest,
And war itself remission from their toils. 615

Thy words are folly, scornful here replied
The Persian monarch. Does not freedom dweell
Among the Grecians? Therefore will they shun
Superiour foes, for whosoe'er is free
Will fly from danger; while the Persians know,
If from th'allotted station they retreat, 621
The scourge awaits them, and my heavy wrath.

CONCEIVE not, Xerxes, Sparta's chief return'd,
The Grecians want an object, where to fix
Their eyes with rev'rence, and obedient dread. 625
To them more awful than the name of king
To Asia's trembling millions is the law,

Whose

Whose sacred voice enjoins them to confront
Unnumber'd foes, to vanquish, or to die.

IN silence now the banish'd king remain'd. 630
While near the straits the chariot roll'd; it chanc'd,
The Spartans then were station'd out on guard.
These, in gymnastic exercise employ'd,
Nor heed the monarch, nor his gaudy train;
But toss'd the spear, and whirl'd the rapid dart, 635
Or met with adverse shields in single war,
Or trooping swiftly rush'd on ev'ry side
With ranks unbroken, and with equal feet:
While others calm beneath their polish'd helms
Drew down their hair, which hung in fable curls,
And spread their necks with terror. Xerxes here
The exile questions. What do these intend, 642
Who thus with careful hands adjust their hair?

To whom the Spartan. O imperial lord,
Such is their custom, to adorn their heads, 645
When with determin'd valour they present
Their dauntless breasts before the jaws of death.

Bring down thy myriads all in glitt'ring steel,
Arm, if thou canst, the gen'ral race of man;
All, who possess the regions unexplor'd 650
Beyond the Ganges, all, whose wand'ring steps
Behind the Caspian range the Scythian wild,
With those, who drink the secret fount of Nile,
Yet to the breasts of Sparta's sons shall fear
Be still a stranger. Thus with fervour spake 655
The exil'd king, when gushing from his eyes
Resistless grief o'erflow'd his cheek. Aside
His head he turn'd, and wept in copious streams.
The sad remembrance of his former state,
His dignity, his greatness, and the sight 660
Of those brave ranks, which thus unshaken stood
And spread amazement through the world in arms,
Excite those sorrows. Oft with eager eyes
He views the godlike warriours, who beneath
His standard once victorious fought, who call'd 665
Him once their king and leader. Then again 666
His head he bows with anguish, and bedews
His breast with tears; in agony bemoans
His faded honours, his illustrious name

Forgotten now, his majesty defil'd 670
With exile and dependence. So, obscur'd
By creeping ivy, and by sordid moss,
Some lordly palace, of stupendous fane
Magnificent in ruin stands; where time 674
Wide-wasting from the nodding roof hath mow'd
The column down, and cleft the pond'rous dome.

55
Not unobserv'd by Hyperanthes mourn'd
Th' unhappy Spartan. Kindly to his own
The exile's hand he joins, and thus humane.
O Demaratus, this thy grief confirms, 680
How well the Greeks deserve thy gen'rous praise,
Who still repining dost their loss deplore,
Though cherish'd here with universal love.
But O let indignation in thy breast
Revive thy wrongs! then bleſs th'auspicious fate,
Which led thee far from calumny and fraud 687
To share the favour of the highest king.

66
As Demaratus with a grateful mind
Address'd himself to answer, Persia's king

Thus interrupted. Soon, as morning shines, 690
Do thou Tigranes and Phraortes head
The Medes and Saces. Bring those Grecians bound.
This said. The monarch to his tent return'd.

End of the third Book.

LEONIDAS.

BOOK IV.

The Argument.

Leonidas rising by break of day commands o body of Arcadians, with the Thespians, and Platæans to be drawn out for battle in that part of Thermopylæ, which lay under the Phocian wall, from whence he barangues them. The enemy approaches. Diomedon kills Tigranes in single combat. Both armies join battle. Dithyrambus kills Phaortes. The Persians, entirely defeated, are pursued with great slaughter by Diomedon and Dithyrambus to the extremity of the pass. The Grecian commanders after the pursuit retire for refreshment to a cave in the side of mount Oeta. Leonidas recalls them to the camp, and sends down fresh forces. Diomedon and Dithyrambus, with the Platæans, are

are permitted to continue in the field. By the advice of Diomedon the Grecians advance to the broadest part of Thermopylæ, where they form a line of thirty in depth, consisting of the Platæans, Mantinæans, Tegeans, Thebans, Corinthians, Plilians, and Mycenæans. The attack is renew'd with great violence by Hyperanthes, Abrocomes, and the principal Persian leaders at the head of some chosen troops.

LACONIA's leader with the morning rose,
When thus to Alpheus. From Arcadia's
bands

Select a thousand spears. To these unite
The Thespians and Platæans. Range their lines
Before the wall, which fortifies the pass: 5
There close-imbodied will their might repulse
The num'rous foe. Obedient to his will
Th' appointed legions issuing from their tents
With deep'ning ranks Leonidas inclose.
So round their monarch in his stormy cave 10
The winds assemble, from his sable throne
When Æolus sends forth his dread command

To

To swell the main, or heav'n with clouds deform,
Or bend the forest from the mountain's brow.
The chief of Sparta from the rampart's height 15
Thus to the fight the list'ning host inflames.

THIS day, O Grecians, countrymen, and friends,
Your wives, your offspring, your paternal seats,
Your fathers, country, liberty, and laws
Have sent you hither, from your infant age 20
Vers'd in the various discipline of Mars,
Laborious, active, virtuous, brave, and free,
To match your valour with ignoble foes
In war unskilful, nature's basest dross,
The foes of all utility and worth, 25
And thence a monarch's mercenary slaves;
With spirits broke by servitude and want,
With limbs relax'd by sloth, and wanton ease,
With minds debauch'd by vices, uninspir'd
By all th' indearing cares in free-born hearts, 30
Who cold and drooping fight without a cause,
To whom defeat is neither grief, nor shame,
Who seek no fruit from victory but spoil.

These

These are the flow'r of Asia's host. The rest,
Who fill their boasted numbers, are a croud 35
Forc'd from their dwellings to the bloody field,
From whom till now with jealous care their lord
Has still withheld the instruments of war.

These are the people, taught with patient grief
To bear the rapine, cruelty, and spurns 40
Of Xerxes' mercenary bands, and pine
In servitude to slaves. With terrour sounds
The trumpet's clangor in their trembling ears.
Unwonted loads, the buckler and the lance,
Their hands sustain incumber'd, and present 45
The mockery of war.—But ev'ry eye
Flames with impatient ardour, and your breasts
Too long their swelling spirit have confin'd.
Go then, ye sons of Liberty, and sweep
These bondmen from the field. Resistless rend 50
The glittering standard from their servile hands.
Hurl to the ground their ignominious heads,
The warriour's helm profaning. Think, the shades
Of your forefathers rear their sacred brows
Here to enjoy the glory of their sons. 55

He spake. Loud Pæans burst from all the host.
With fierce reply unnumber'd shouts ascend
From hostile nations thronging down the pass.
Such is the roar of Ætna, when her mouth 59
Displodes combustion from her sulph'rous depths,
And blasts the smiles of nature. Dauntless stood
In deep array before the Phocian wall
The Greeks close-wedg'd with implicated shields,
And spears pretended, like the graceful range
Of arduous elms, whose interwoven boughs 65
Before some rural palace wide expand
Their venerable umbrage to retard
The North's impetuous wing. As o'er the main
In lucid rows the rising waves reflect
The sun's effulgence, so the Grecian helms 70
Return'd his light, which o'er their convex
pour'd,
And scatter'd splendour on the dancing plumes.
Down rush'd the foe. Exulting in the van
Their haughty leader shakes his threatening lance;
And frowns defiance. Bursting from his rank 75
Diomedon with instant fury fac'd

Th'impending foes. Meantime he loudly calls
Their chief Tigranes, whom he thus defies.

Now thou art met, Barbarian. Wouldst thou prov
Thy actions equal to thy vaunts, command 8
Thy troops to halt, while thou [and I engage.

TIGRANES turning to the Persians spake.
My friends and soldiers, check your ardent haste,
While my strong lance yon Grecian's pride con
founds.

He ceas'd. In dreadful opposition now 85
Each combatant advanc'd. With sinewy hand
They gripe their spears high-brandish'd. Thrice
they drove
With well-directed force the pointed steel
At either's throat, and thrice their shields repel
The destin'd wound. At length the eastern chief
With all his pow'rs collected for the stroke 91
His javelin rivets in the Grecian targe.
Aside Diomedon inclines, and shuns

Approaching

alls Approaching fate. Then all his martial skill
Undaunted summons. His forsaken lance 95
Beside him cast, his falchion he unsheathes.

prov The blade descending on Tigranes' arm,
8 That instant struggling to redeem his spear,
The shiv'ring hand dislevers. Pale affright
Unmans the Persian, while his active foe 100
Full on his neck discharg'd the rapid sword,
And open'd wide the purple gates of life.
Low sinks Tigranes in eternal shade.

The conqueror bestrides the prostrate dead,
Then in the clotted ringlets of the hair 105
85 His hand intwining from the bleeding trunk
The head disjoin'd, and whirl'd with sudden rage
Amid the hostile numbers. All with dread
Recoil, where'er the ghastly visage flew
In sanguine circles, and pursu'd its track 110
1 Of horrour through the air. Not more amaz'd
A barb'rous nation, whom the chearful dawn
95 Of science ne'er illumin'd, view on high
A meteor waving with portentous blaze;
Where oft, as superstition vainly dreams; 115

Some dæmon sits amid the baneful fires,
Dispersing plagues and desolation round.

Awhile the stern Diomedon remains
Triumphant o'er the dire dismay, which froze
The hearts of Persia; then with haughty port, 120
And sullen joy among his gladsome friends
Resumes his station. Still the Asian bands
With consternation motionless behold
Their foes with terror, and suspend the fight;
When thus Phraortes animates their breasts. 125

HEAV'NS! can one leader's death appal this host,
Which counts a train of monarchs for its chiefs!
Behold Phraortes! from Imaüs' ridge
I draw my subject files. With hardy toil
I through the pathless forest have explor'd 130
The tiger's cavern. This unconquer'd arm
Hath from the lion rent the shaggy spoil.
So through this field of slaughter will I chase
Yon vaunting Greek with ruin on his head
For great Tigranes slain. His words revive 135
The flame of valour through the drooping van,

Then

Then on the rear he brandishes his lance.

Before him shrink th'affrighted croud, and roll

Their numbers headlong on the Grecian steel

With loose arrangement, and uncertain feet. 140

Thus with his trident ocean's angry god

From its vast bottom turns the hideous mass

Of waters upward, and o'erwhelms the beach,

Terrific stood the fierce Platæan chief

Amid the Grecian van. His ample targe, 145

Like a strong bulwark, prominent he rais'd

Before the line. There thunder'd all the storm

Of darts and arrows. His undaunted train

With emulating ardour charge the foe,

Where'er they turn the formidable spears, 150

Which drench'd the glebe of Marathon with gore,

The Persians heap the plain. Diomedon

Leads on the slaughter. From his nodding crest

The sable plumes shook terrour. Asia's bands

All shudder backward at the dreadful beams 155

Of that unconquerable sword, which falls

With lightning's swiftness o'er their trembling heads,

And reeking still with slain Tigranes' blood

Their shatter'd ranks o'erturns. The furious chief,
Incompas'd round with carnage, and besmeir'd 160
With sanguine drops, inflames his warlike friends.

O DITHYRAMBUS! let thy deeds this day
Surmount their wonted lustre! Thou in arms,
Demophilus, worn grey, thy youth recal!
Behold these slaves without resistance bleed. 165
Advance, my ancient friend. Propitious fame
Smiles on thy years, and gives thy aged hand
To pluck fresh laurels for thy honour'd brow.

As, when indu'd with Promethean heat,
The molten clay respir'd; with sudden warmth
So glows the venerable Thespian's age, 171
With new-born vigour ev'ry sinew swells.
His falchion thund'ring on Cherasmes' helm
The forehead clove. Ecbatana to war
Sent forth Cherasmes. From her potent gates 175
He proud in hope her swarming numbers led,
With Ariazus and Peucestes join'd,
His martial brothers. They attend his doom

By

Book IV. L E O N I D A S.

101

By Dithyrambus foil'd. Their hoary fire

Shall o'er his solitary palace roam,

180

Lamenting loud his childless years, and curse

Ambition's fury, and the lust of war,

Then pining bow with anguish to the grave.

Next by the fierce Platæan's matchless sword

Expires Damates, once the host and friend

185

Of fall'n Tigranes; him that day he join'd,

And left his native bands. Of Syrian birth

In Daphne he resided near the grove,

Whose hospitable laurels in their shade

Conceal'd the virgin fugitive, that scorn'd

190

Th' embrace of Phœbus; hither she repair'd

Far from her parent stream, in fables feign'd

Herself a laurel to have rear'd her head.

With verdant bloom in this retreat, the grove

Of Daphne call'd, the seat of rural blifs,

195

Fan'd by the wing of zephirs, and with rills

Of bubbling founts irriguous, Syria's boast,

And happy rival of Theffalia's vale;

Now hid for ever from Damates' eyes.

Nor with unactive spears th' Arcadians stood. 200

Gigantic Clonius unresisted press'd
The yielding Persians, who before him sunk,
Crush'd like vile stubble underneath the steps
Of some glad hind, who visits o'er the plain
His new-shorn harvest. - With a fearless eye 205
Phraortes saw the gen'ral rout. He sprung
O'er hills of carnage to confront the Greeks,
Reproaching thus his own inglorious friends,

FLY then, ye cowards, and desert your chief;
Yet single here my falchion shall oppose 210
The might of thousands. Raging thus he drove
The deathful steel through Aristander's breast,
Him Dithyrambus lov'd, a sacred bard
Rever'd for justice, for his verse renown'd,
Which sung the deeds of heroes, those, who fell, 215
Or those, who conquer'd in their country's cause,
Th' inraptur'd soul inflaming with the thirst
Of glory won by virtue. His high strain
The Muses favour'd from their neighb'ring groves,
And bless'd with heav'nly melody his lyre. 220
No more from Thesbia shall his feet ascend

The

The shady sheep of Helicon. No more
The streams divine of Aganippe's fount
His tuneful lip shall moisten, nor his hands
Present their off'rings in the Muses bow'r,

225

The prostrate shield and unforsaken lance
Now feebly grasping, never more to swell
His lofty numbers on the sounding string.

Lo! Dithyrambus weeps. Amid the rage
Of war and conquest a swift-gushing tear
Finds one sad moment's interval to fall

230

On his pale friend. But soon the victor proves
His fierce revenge. Through shield and corselet
plung'd,

His furious javelin tore the Persian's chest.

235

Phraortes sinks, nor yet expiring, sees
With indignation Persia's myriads fly.

Swift through their broken legions, side by side,
Urg'd by the voice of Victory and Fame,
Diomedon and Dithyrambus rang'd.

240

So, where Alpheus heard the ratling car,
And sounding hoofs along his echoing banks,
Two gen'rous coursers link'd in mutual reins

With equal speed and ardour beat the dust

To reach the glories of th' Olympic goal.

245

THIS from his lofty chariot Xerxes saw.

He saw his numbers pouring from the straits

In crowded flight, then spreading o'er the field,

All broke and scatter'd; as a river bursts

Impetuous from its fountain, then expands

250

Its limpid surface o'er the pastures broad.

Thrice started from his seat th' astonish'd king,

Shame, fear, and indignation rend his breast;

As ruin irresistible were near

To overwhelm his millions. Haste (he calls

255

To Hyperanthes) haste, and meet the Greeks;

Their daring rage and insolence repel,

And from dishonour vindicate our name.

THE godlike Hyperanthes through the tents

Obedient moves. Deliberate and brave

260

Each active prince he summons, and with care

Collects the hardiest troops. Around him soon

Innumerable javelins flame. His voice

Demands attention, when he thus began.

Now,

Now, friends, divide, and form two equal bands.

One with the great Abrocomes, with me, 266

With Intaphernes, and Hydarnes bold,

With Mindus and Pandates shall advance,

And snatch this short-liv'd victory from Greece.

You Abradates with Pharnuchus join'd, 270

Orontes, and Mazæus, keep the rest

Imbattled ready to impart their aid,

Shou'd envious Fate exhaust our num'rous ranks;

For, O great Mithra, may thy radiant eye

Ne'er see us, yielding to ignoble flight, 275

The Persian fame dishonour, and the praise

Of our renown'd progenitors, who led

By Cyrus gave a monarch to the world.

Think, O ye princes, flow'r of Asia's realms,

What endless infamy will blast your names, 280

Should Greece, that narrow portion of the globe,

Your arms defy; when Babylon hath low'r'd

Its tow'ring head, when Lydia's pride is quell'd,

And from Ecbatana its empire torn.

Think too, ye warlike bands, our army's boast, 285

What deeds are ask'd from your superiour swords;

You, who our monarch's largest bounty share,
You, to whose faith and valour he commits 288
Himself, his queens, his realms, and now his fame.

WHILE Hyperanthes marshall'd thus his host
Far as th' eytremest limit of the pass,
Diomedon and Dithyrambus hung
Upon the rear of Persia. Now they turn
Victorius, striding o'er th' impurpled heaps 294
Of arms, and mangled dead, themselves with gore
Distain'd; like two grim tigers, who have forc'd
A nightly mansion on the desart rais'd
By some lone-wandring traveller, and, dy'd
With human slaughter, through the forest deep
Back to their covert's dreary gloom retire. 300
So pass'd these heroes e'er the crimson rock,
Approaching now, where gasping on his shield
Phraortes lay recumbent. Thesbia's youth
Advancing, thus his gen'rous soul express'd.

Li'st thou, brave Persian? By propitious Jove,
From whom the pleasing sense of mercy flows 306
Through

Through mortal bosoms, less my soul rejoic'd,
When fortune gave the victory before,
Than now to raise thee from this field of death.

THE dying prince his languid sight unclos'd, 310
And thus with trembling lips. Vain man, forbear
To proffer me, what soon thyself must crave.
The day is now extinguish'd in these orbs,
Nor shall my heart beat longer than to scorn
Thy mercy, Grecian; then resign to fate. 315

He ceas'd. The great, and haughty spirit fled.
Demophilus drew nigh. The hoary chief
Long o'er Phaortes' corse his head inclin'd,
Pois'd on his lance, and thus address'd the slain.

ALAS! how glorious were that bleeding breast,
Had Justice giv'n the buckler to thy arm, 321
And to preserve a people bade thee die!
Who now shall mourn thee! Thy ungrateful king
Will soon forget thy worth. Thy native land
For thee no sumptuous monument shall raise

Of

Of public sorrow; thy recorded name

326

No sighs among thy countrymen shall wake

For their lost hero: what to them avail'd

Thy might and dauntless spirit? Not to guard

Their wives and offspring from the spoil of war,

Not from their walls repel the hostile blaze, 331

Nor desolation from their fruitful fields,

But to extend oppression didst thou fall;

Perhaps with inborn virtues in thy heart,

Which, but thy angry destiny forbade, 335

By freedom cherish'd might have blest'd mankind.

All-bounteous Nature! thy impartial laws

To no selected race of men confine

The sense of glory, fortitude, and all

The nobler passions, which inspire the mind, 340

And render life illustrious. These thou plant'st

In ev'ry soil. But freedom, like the sun,

Must warm the gen'rous seeds. By her alone

They bloom and flourish; while oppression blasts

The tender virtues: hence a spurious growth 345

False honour, savage valour taint the soul,

And wild ambition: hence rapacious pow'r

The

The ravag'd earth unpeoples, and the brave,
A feast for dogs, bestrew th' insanguin'd plain.

He said. Around the venerable man 350

The Grecians throng'd attentive. Conquest hush'd
Its joyful transports. O'er the horrid field,
Late the rude scene of tumult, all was calm.

So, when the song of Thracian Orpheus drew 355

To Hebrus' margin from their dreary seats
The savage race, which Hæmus wrapt in clouds,
Pangæus cold, and Rhodopeian snows

In blood and discord nurs'd; the soothing strain
Flow'd with enchantment thro' their ravish'd ears:

Their fierceness melted, and aimaz'd they learn'd
The sacred laws of justice, which the bard 361
Mix'd with the musick of his heav'nly string.

Not from the field of slaughter for remote
In Oeta's rugged side had nature clove
A rocky cavern. This with moss she spread, 365
And o'er the entrance downward from the roots
She hung the shaggy trunks of branching firs

To

To heav'n's hot ray impervious, From the sides
 The vivid laurel spread before the sun,
 Its broad and glitt'ring foliage; and, above, 370
 The hill was darken'd with a solemn shade
 Cast from the sable cypress. This retreat
 Cool, as the grot of Thetis, hid beneath
 The vaulted ocean, with the murmur'ring sound
 Of waters trickling from the riven stone 375
 The Grecian leaders to its gloom invites.
 Their helms they loosen from their glowing cheeks,
 Against the rock their bucklers they repose.
 Propt on their spears they stood, when Agis thus,
 Sent by Leonidas, accosts the chiefs. 380

O EVER-WORTHY of undying names !
 Leonidas recalls you from your toil,
 Which has already fill'd our mouths with praise,
 Our eyes with wonder, that from yonder tow'r
 On your unequall'd deeds incessant gaz'd 385

To whom the bold Diomedon return'd.
 Go Agis, say to Lacedæmon's king,

As

Book IV. L E O N I D A S. 111

As yet untried my hand can poise the spear,
Nor hangs the buckler heavy on my arm.
And shall I then retire? And once again 390
Shall not the sun, before he sink, behold
The slaves of Xerxes tremble at my lance?

To him the Thespian youth. My friend and
guide

To noble actions, since thy gen'rous mind
Intent on fame disdains to rest, O grant, 395
I too thy glorious labours may partake,
And learn once more to imitate thy deeds.
Thou, gentlest Agis, Sparta's chief intreat
Not to command us from the field of war.

THEN interpos'd Demophilus. O friend, 400
And thou, lov'd offspring of the dearest man,
Who dost restore my brother to my eyes,
My soul your magnanimity applauds.
But, O reflect, that unabating toil 404
Subdues the mightiest. Valour then will figh,
When the weak hand obeys the heart no more.
Yet I declining with the weight of years

Will

Will not assign a measure to your strength;
If still you find your vigour undecay'd,
Stay and augment your glory. So, when time 410
Your heads shall whiten, and your feeble arms
Round the high temple's peaceful vault have hung
Their consecrated shields, your native land
Shall then with honours doubled on your age
Requite the gen'rous labours of your prime. 415
So spake the senior, and forsook the cave.

Now from the bubbling spring Diomedon
Receives the waters in his concave helm;
And thus address'd the genius of the flood.

WHO'ER thou art, whose deity presides 420
O'er this fair fountain, bounteous are thy streams;
Though ill shall I repay thee: for again
Will I this day pollute thy silver wave,
Which mix'd with gore shall tinge the Malian surge.

So saying from his brimming casque he quaff'd
The clear, refreshing moisture. Thus repairs 426

The

The spotted panther to Hydaspes' side,
 Or eastern Indus, feasted with the blood
 Of some torn deer, which nigh his cruel grasp
 Had roar'd unheeding through the secret grove;
 Rapacious o'er the humid brink he stoops, 431
 And in the pure and fluid crystal cools
 His reeking jaws. The Thespian warriour here.

SEE, valiant friend, Leonidas hath fill'd
 The palls with fresh battalions. O survey 435
 Yon line of plumed helms, and glitt'ring shields,
 Which emulate the mid-day sun. What joy!
 What ardent hope enlightens ev'ry face!
 O let us wait no longer, lest they cry,
 Our wearied limbs retard us. Let us arm, 440
 And take our station in the glorious van.

THUS Dithyrambus. The Platæan chief
 Approves the counsel, and resumes his arms.
 Them as a splendid recompense he bore
 From grateful Athens, when his conqu'ring sword
 Her domes with great Miltiades redeem'd 446

From Asiatic flames. Th' insculptur'd helm
Now press'd his manly temples. From on high
A fourfold plumage nodded, and, beneath,
A golden dragon with effulgent scales 450
The gorgeous crest illumin'd. On his arm
His shield he brac'd. Gorgonian serpents twin'd
Aroun'd the spacious verge. Within, the form
Of Pallas, martial goddess, was impress'd.
Low, as her feet, the graceful tunic flow'd. 455
Betwixt two griffins on her helmet sat
A sphynx with wings expanded, while the face
Of dire Medusa on her bosom frown'd.
One hand supports her javelin, which confounds
The pride of kings; the other leads along 460
A blooming virgin, Victory, whose brows
A crown incircles; laurels she presents;
But from her shoulders all her plumes were shorn,
With favour'd Athens ever now to rest.
This, Asia's terrour, on his mighty arm 465
Diomedon uprear'd, then snatch'd his lance,
And thus to Dithyrambus. Lo! my friend,
Alone of all the Grecians, who sustain'd

The

The morning's battle, still unwearied stand
Platæa's sons, and well may keep the field, 470
They, who endur'd the Marathonian toil.
Then charge with us. Amid the foremost rank
Thy valour shall be plac'd, and share, this day,
Command and honours with Platæa's chief. 474

THE hero ceas'd, and tow'r'd the Grecian van
Strides with impetuous steps. Nor slow behind
The boast of Thespia, Dithyrambus, mov'd;
Like blooming Hermes in celestial arms,
When lightly graceful with his feather'd feet
Along Scamander's flow'ry verge he pass'd, 480
To aid th' incens'd divinities of Greece
Against the Phrygian tow'rs. With eager speed
The heroes soon th'imbattled Greeks attain'd,
To whom the brave Diomedon began.

NOT to contend, but vanquish are you come,
And in the blood of fugitives to stain 486
Your lances unoppos'd. My friends, behold,
Where furthest from the Malian gulf remov'd

The crags of Oeta less confine the straits.

There let us bend extending wide our front. 490

There with more ample scope may havoc range.

ALL with assent gave ear. The various bands

Move on successive. The Platæans first

Against the rock are station'd. To their head

Is Dithyrambus brought. Exulting joy 495

Distends their hearts, and flashes in their eyes.

Thanks to the great Diomedon, they cry,

Who to our troop this godlike hero joins.

Hail! Dithyrambus. Hail! illustrious chief.

Well dost thou merit to have reap'd renown 500

At Marathon. Amid the glorious front

With conscious gladness blushing on his cheek

The youth his post assumes. Around him crowd

The hoary warriours their unnumber'd scars

Before his sight presenting, and recount 505

Their various dangers. He their wounds surveys

With veneration, nor disdains to hear

The oft-repeated tale. From Sparta's king

Returning, Agis here the chiefs address'd.

Book IV. L E O N I D A S. 117

Leonidas permits you still to brave 510

The hostile numbers, with Platæa's band,

If yet by toil unconquer'd. But I see,

That all unwearied ask the promis'd fight.

Hail! glorious veterans. This signal day

May your victorious swords augment the wreaths

Around your venerable brows, and make 516

Thermopylæ, like Marathon, renown'd.

THIS said, he hastens back. Meantime advanc'd

The Mantinæan, Diophantus brave,

And Hegefander, Tegea's dauntless chief, 520

With all their troops imbattled; by their side

The Thebans form; to them their native files

Alcmæon and Eupalamus unite;

Last on the margin of the Malian bay

Mycenæ's youth Aristobulus drew; 525

In one impenetrable phalanx stretch'd

Across the pass. With close-connected force

An hundred warriours form'd th' expanded ranks,

And thirty bucklers ev'ry file condens'd.

In strong reserve Dieneces behind 530

118 L E O N I D A S. Book IV.

Dispos'd the Spartans, and the Locrian line.

There too with Maron Alpheus dauntless stood,
And godlike Agis. There Megistias plac'd
His blooming heir, and thus his valour fires.

O MENALIPPUS! born of foreign race,

535

Yet by these heroes not unworthy deem'd
With them to fight for Sparta! lo! the hour
Is come, my son, to shew thy gen'rous heart;
That not with thee the buckler and the spear
Are ill intrusted to maintain a cause
540
So great and sacred. O remember well,
Leonidas on yonder bulwark stands,
Who all the war contemplates, and discerns
The bold and fearful. O propitious heav'n!
Grant me to hear Leonidas this day
545
Applaud my son, and let Megistias die!

WHILE thus he spake, the animated soul

Of Menalippus struggling in his breast

Demands the fight. This saw the tender fire,

And thus with tears rejoin'd. Remember too! 550

Thy

Book IV. L E O N I D A S. 559

Thy father sees thy danger. Oh! my child! 559
To me thy honour as to thee is dear; 560
Yet court not death! By all thy filial love, 561
By all my cares and fondness I implore! 562
Amid the combat, or the warm pursuit, 563
Still by the wise Dieneces abide: 564
His prudent valour knows th' unerring paths, 565
Of glory; he will guide thy youthful steps. 566
This said, to Sparta's leader he retires.

Now are the enemies descried. The van 560
Abrocomes and Hyperanthes led, 561
With them Pandates, Intaphernes proud, 562
Hydarnes, Mindus. Violent their march 563
With sounding footsteps swept the stony way. 564
So, where th' unequal globe in mountains swells, 565
A river pours its thund'ring surge between 566
The steep-erected cliffs; tumultuous roll
The torrents bursting o'er the pointed crags: 567
The mountains roar, the marble channel foams.
With obvious arms th' intrepid Greeks withstand
The dire encounter. Soon th' impetuous shock 571

Of thousands and of myriads shakes the ground.

Stupendous scene of terror! Under hills,

Whose nodding summits vaulted o'er their heads,

In unextinguishable fury join'd

575

The dreadful conflict. With inverted trunks

Obliquely bending from the shagged ridge

The sylvan horrors overshad the fight.

The shrill-mouth'd trumpet, and the deep-tun'd
horn,

Mix'd with the crash of intermingling spears, 580

The clanging shields, and war's discordant shouts

Awake the echoes through the neighb'ring groves;

And rocks and shores return the hideous sound.

End of the fourth Book.

LEONI.

LEONIDAS.

BOOK V.

The Argument.

Hyperanthes discontinuing the fight, while he waits for reinforcements, Teribazus, a Persian remarkable for his merit and learning, and highly belov'd by Hyperanthes, but unhappy in his passion for Ariana, a daughter of Darius, advances from the rest of the army to the rescue of a friend in distress, who lay wounded on the field of battle. Teribazus is attack'd by Diophantus, the Mantinéan, whom he overcomes, then engaging with Dithyrambus, is himself slain. Hyperanthes hastens to his succour. A general battle ensues. Hyperanthes and Abrocomes, partly by their own valour, and partly by the perfidy of the Thebans, who desert the line, being on the point of forcing the Grecians, are repuls'd by the Lacedæmonians. Hyperanthes compos-

poses a select body out of the Persian standing forces, and making an improvement in their discipline renewes the attack; upon which Leonidas changes the disposition of his army: Hyperanthes and the ablest Persian generals are driven out of the field, and several thousands of the Barbarians, circumvented in the pass, are entirely destroy'd.

A MID the van of Persia was a youth
Nam'd Teribazus, not for golden stores,
Not for wide pastures travers'd o'er with herds,
With bleating thousands, or with bounding steeds,
Nor yet for pow'r, nor splendid honours fam'd. 5
Rich was his mind in ev'ry art divine,
And through the paths of science had he walk'd
The votary of wisdom. In the years,
When tender down invests the ruddy cheek,
He with the Magi turn'd the hallow'd page 10
Of Zoroastres; then his tow'ring soul
High on the plumes of contemplation soard,
And from the lofty Babylonian fane
With learn'd Chaldaens trac'd the mystic sphere;
There number'd o'er the vivid fires, that gleam 15

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Book V. L E O N I D A S. 123

Upon the dusky bosom of the night.

Nor on the sands of Ganges were unheard
The Indian sages from sequester'd bow'r's,
While, as attention wonder'd, they disclos'd
The pow'r's of nature; whether in the woods, 20
The fruitful glebe, or flow'r, or healing plant,
The limpid waters, or the ambient air,
Or in the purer element of fire.

The fertile plains, where great Sesostris reign'd,
Mysterious Ægypt, next the youth survey'd 25
From Elephantis, where impetuous Nile
Precipitates his waters, to the sea,
Which for below receives the sev'nfold stream.
Thence o'er th' Ionic coast he stray'd, nor pass'd
Miletus by, which once inraptur'd heard 30
The tongue of Thales, nor Priene's walls,
Where wisdom dwelt with Bias, nor the seat
Of Pittacus along the Lesoian shore
Here too melodious numbers charm'd his ear,
Which flow'd from Orpheus, and Musæus old, 35
And thee, O father of immortal verse,
Mæonides, whose strains through ev'ry age

Time

Time with his own eternal lip shall sing.
Back to his native Susa then he turn'd
His wandring steps. His merit soon was dear 40
To Hyperanthes generous and good.
And Ariana from Darius sprung
With Hyperanthes, of th' imperial race,
Which rul'd th' extent of Asia, in disdain
Of all her greatness oft an humble ear 45
To him would bend, and listen to his voice.
Her charms, her mind, her virtue he explor'd
Admiring. Soon was admiration chang'd
To love, nor lov'd he sooner, than despair'd.
But unreveal'd and silent was his pain; 50
Nor yet in solitary shades he roam'd,
Nor shun'd resort: but o'er his sorrows cast
A sickly dawn of gladness, and in smiles
Conceal'd his anguish; while the secret flame
Rag'd in his bosom, and its peace consum'd: 55
His heart still brooding o'er these mournful thoughts.

CAN I, O wisdom, seek relief from thee,
Who dost approve my passion? From the pow'r

Of

Of beauty only thou wouldest guard my heart.
But here thy self art charm'd, where softness, grace,
And ev'ry virtue dignify desire; 61
Yet thus to love despairing is to prove
The sharpest sorrow, which relentless Fate
Can from her store of woes inflict on life:
But dost not thou this moment warn my soul 65
To fly the fatal charmer? Do I pause?
Back to the wise Chaldæans will I go,
Or wander on the Ganges; where to heav'n
With thee my elevated soul shall tow'r,
With thee the secrets of the earth unveil. 70
There no tumultuous passion shall molest
My tranquil hours, and ev'ry thought be calm.
O wretched Teribazus! all conspires
Against thy peace. Our mighty lord prepares
To overwhelm the Grecians. Ev'ry youth 75
Attends the war, and I, who late have pois'd
With no inglorious arm the soldier's lance,
And near the side of Hyperanthes fought,
Must join the throng. How therefore can I fly
From Ariana! who with Asia's queens 80

The

The splendid camp of Xerxes will adorn.
 Then be it so. Again I will adore
 Her gentle virtue. Her delightful tongue,
 Her graceful sweetnes\$ shall again diffuse
 Resistless magic through my ravish'd heart; 83
 And thus when love with double rage inflam'd
 Swells to distraction in my tortur'd breast,
 Then—But in vain through darknes\$ do I search
 My fate: despair and fortune be my guides.

THE hour arriv'd, when Xerxes first advanc'd
 His arms from Susa's gates. The Persian dames 91
 (So were accustom'd all the eastern fair)
 In sumptuous care accompanied his march;
 And Ariana grac'd the beauteous train.
 From morn till ev'ning Teribazus guards 95
 Her passing wheels; his arm her weight sustains
 With trembling pleasure often, as she mounts
 Th' imperial chariot; his assiduous hand
 From each pure fountain wafts the living flood:
 Nor seldom by the fair-one's soft command 100
 Would he repose him at her feet reclin'd,

While

While o'er his lips her lovely forehead bow'd,
Won with his grateful eloquence, that sooth'd
With sweet variety the tedious march,
Beguiling time. He too would then forget 105
His cares awhile, in raptures vain intranc'd,
Delusion all, and fleeting rays of joy
Roan overcast with more intense despair;
Like wintry clouds, which op'ning for a time
Tinge their black skirts with scatter'd beams of day;
Then swiftly closing, on the brows of Morn 111
Condense their horrors, and in thickest gloom
The ruddy beauty veil. Such woes oppress'd
The Persian's heart, not soften'd; for this day
His daring valour from the bleeding van 115
Oppos'd the frown of adamantine Mars.
With no tiara were his temples bound,
The slender lance of Asia he disdain'd,
And her light target. Eminent he mov'd
In Grecian arms the wonder of his foes. 120

Among th' Ionians had his strenuous limbs
In war been practic'd. A resplendent cask
Flam'd on his head. Before his face and chest

Down

Down to the knees his ample shield was spread.
A pond'rous ash with skilful hands he grasp'd. 125
Thus arm'd, tremendous in the front he stood,
Beneath his might two bold Phliasians died,
And three Tegéans, whose indignant chief,
Brave Hegefander, vengeance breath'd in vain
With streaming wounds repuls'd. Thus far un
match'd 130

His strength prevail'd, when Hyperanthes' voice
Recall'd his fainting legions. Now each band
Their languid courage reinforc'd with rest,
Mean time with Teribazus thus confer'd
The godlike prince. Thou much deserving youth!
O had thy deeds with emulation warm'd 136
The frozen hearts of Persia, Greece had wept
Her prostrate ranks, not triumph'd in our shame,
Relaxing now the wearied fight I wait,
Till from the camp with Abradates strong 140
The brave Pharnuchus and Mazæus move,
And with fresh pow'rs renew the drooping war.
For since surpass'd in valour, we must waste
By endless numbers, and continual toil
The matchless ardour of our gallant foes. 145

HE said. Immers'd in fadness scarce replied,
But to himself thus plain'd the am'rous youth.

STILL do I languish mourning o'er the fame,
My arm acquires. O wretched heart! thou seat
Of constant sorrow, what deceitful smiles 150
Yet canst thou borrow from illusive hope
To flatter life. At Ariana's feet
What if with supplicating knees I bow'd,
Implor'd her pity, and reveal'd my love?
Wretch, canst thou climb to yon effulgent orb, 155
And share the splendours which irradiate heav'n?
Dost thou aspire to that exalted maid,
Great Xerxes' sister, rivalling the hopes
Of Asia's purpled potentates and kings?
Unless within her bosom I inspir'd 160
A passion fervent as my own, nay more,
Such as might dissipate each virgin fear,
And unrestrain'd disclose its fond desire,
My hopes are fruitless. Plung'd in black despair
Me thus revolv'd, when suddenly the cries 165
Of Aribæus smote his pensive ear.

By mutual danger, and by friendship join'd,
They had been long companions in the toils
Of war. Together with victorious steps
The sons of Nile they chac'd, when Ægypt's pride
Before the arms of Hyperanthes fell. 171
Stretch'd on the plain, and cover'd o'er with wounds,
By all abandon'd, Teribazus views
His gallant friend. His languid soul awakes,
And forth he issues from the Persian line. 175
The bleeding warriour in his strong embrace
Swift he conveys. By indignation fir'd
Fierce from the Grecians Diophantus rush'd
With loud defiance. Teribazus leaves
His rescu'd friend. His massy targe he rears, 180
Advances high his formidable spear,
And turns intrepid on th' approaching foe.
Amazement follow'd. On he strode, and strook
The plumed honours of his shining crest.
Th' ill-fated Greek awaits th' unequal fight; 185
Pierc'd in the throat with sounding arms he falls;
Through ev'ry hand the Mantineans mourn.
Upon the slain the victor fix'd his sight,

And

And thus reflected. By thy splendid arms
Thou art a Greek of no ignoble rank, 190
And from thy fall perhaps am I adorn'd
With more conspicuous lustre. What if heav'n
Should add new victims, like thyself, to grace
My undeserving hand, who knows, but she 194
Might smile upon my trophies. Oh! vain thought!
Disperse, ye fantome hopes! Too long, my heart,
Hast thou in vain contended with thy woes! 200
I stand this moment on the verge of life,
By fame invited, by despair impell'd
To pass th' irremovable bound. No more
Shall Teribazus backward turn his steps, 205
But here decide his fate. Then beat no more,
Thou troubled heart, and ev'ry grief be still
Now at th' approach of everlasting peace.

He ended, when a mighty foe drew nigh; 205
Not less than Dithyrambus. E'er they join'd,
The Persian thus the Thespian youth address'd.
Say, art not thou th' unconquerable Greek,
Whose dauntless valour mow'd our battle down,

And scatter'd nations? To attempt thy force 210
This day I purpos'd, when our chiefs from fight
Their host withdrew? That now my single arm
Thou deign'st to meet, receive my thanks; and
know,

The thought of conquest less employs my mind,
Than that by thee I cannot fall with shame. 215

He ceas'd. These words the Thespian chief return'd.

Of all the praises from thy gen'rous mouth
The only share, which justice bids me claim,
Is, that I here adventure to confront 219
Thy matchless strength. Believe not, that unmark'd
Were thy great deeds. From yon unbounded camp
None yet hath equal'd thy victorious hand.
But whence thy armour of the Grecian form?
Whence thy tall spear? thy helmet? whence the
weight
Of that strong shield unlike thy eastern friends? 225
O if thou be'st some fugitive, who, lost
To liberty and virtue, art become

A tyrant's vile stipendiary; with grief
 That valour, thus triumphant, I behold,
 Which after all its danger, and brave toil 230
 Deserves no honour from the Gods, or men.

HERE Teribazus with a sigh return'd.

I am to Greece a stranger, and a wretch
 To thee unknown, who seek, this hour, to die; 230
 Though not ignobly, but in death to raise 235
 My name from darknes, while I end my woes.

THE Grecian then. I view thee, and I mourn.
 A dignity, which virtue only bears,
 And resolution on thy brow enthron'd
 (Though grief hath dim'd thy drooping eye) demand
 My veneration; and whatever be 240
 The malice of thy fortune, what the cares,
 Which thus infest thy quiet, they create
 Within my breast the pity of a friend:
 Why hast thou then compell'd me to oppose 245
 My arm against thee, while thy might supports
 Th' unjust ambition of malignant kings,

The foes to virtue, liberty, and peace?
Yet free from rage, or enmity I lift
My adverse javelin. Victory I ask, 250
Thy life may fate for happier hours reserve.

THIS said, their beaming lances they pretend,
Of hostile hate, or fury both devoid;
As on the Isthmian, or Olympic sand 255
For fame alone contending. Either host
Pois'd on their spears in silent wonder gaz'd.
The fight begins, when soon the Grecian lance,
Which all the day in constant battle worn
Unnumber'd shields and corselets had transfix'd,
Against the Persian target, shiv'ring breaks, 260
Its master's hand disarming. Then began
The sense of honour, and the dread of shame
To swell in Dithyrambus. Undismay'd
He grapples with the foe, and instant seiz'd
The threatning javelin, e'er th'uplifted arm 265
Could execute the meditated wound.
The weapon burst betwixt their struggling hands.
They loose their grasp, and bare their shining swords.

With

With equal swiftness to defend, or charge,
 Each active youth advances, or recedes. 270

On ev'ry side they traverse, now direct,
 Obliquely now the wheeling blades descend.
 Still is the conflict dubious, when the Greek
 Dissembling points his falchion to the earth,
 His arm depress'd, as overcome with toil; 275

While with his buckler cautious he repels
 The blows repeated from th' exulting foe.
 Greece trembles for her hero. Joy pervades
 The Asian ranks, and Hyperanthes strides
 Before the line, preparing to receive 280

His friend triumphant. Teribazus now
 Press'd with redoubled efforts. Still the Greek
 Sustains th' assault defensive, and at last,
 As with unguarded fury of his strokes
 Th' unwary Persian sideways swung his targe, 285

The fatal moment Dithyrambus watch'd,
 And darting forward with his feet outstretch'd
 His falchion buries in th' obnoxious side.
 Affection, grief, and terror wing the speed
 Of Hyperanthes. From his bleeding foe 290

The Greek retires, not distant, and awaits
 The eastern prince. But he with wat'ry cheeks,
 And dumb with sorrow clasps his dying friend,
 From whose cold lip with interrupted phrase

These accents broke. O dearest, best of men! 295
 My heart is fruitful with ten thousand thoughts
 Of gratitude and love to thee; but fate
 Denies my voice the ut'rance. O my friend!

O Hyperanthes! hear my tongue unfold 299
 What thou shouldst ne'er have known before this
 hour;

When, as I open all my secret soul,
 I may at once retire, and veil my eyes
 In endless night: nor thou presumption deem
 What with my dying breath I here divulge.

I love thy sister. With despair I lov'd, 305
 And thence perhaps untimely is my date;
 Though, witness heav'n, without regret I bleed
 With honour thus in Persia's fight and thine.

He ceas'd: th' inexorable hand of Fate 309
 Weigh'd down his eyelids, and the gloom of death
 His

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His fleeting sight eternally o'ershades. 311

Him on, Choaspes o'er the blooming verge
His frantic mother shall bewail, and strew
Her silver tresses in the crystal tide;

While all the shore re-echoes to the name 315
Of Teribazus lost. Th' afflicted prince
The pallid corse contemplating with tears,
Thus in the bitterness of grief exclaims.

Oh! Theribazus. Oh! my friend, whose loss
I will deplore for ever. Oh! what pow'r 320
To me and thee averse thus clos'd thy breast
To Hyperanthes with distrust unkind.

She should, she must have lov'd thee. Now no more
Thy friendly aspect shall delight my eyes,
While in remembrance thy unequal'd worth 325

Will live for ever to remind my grief
Of what I lost. O Susa, if again
Thee I revisit from this hostile land,
Far from the clamours of tumultuous war,
Then shall my hours be vacant to complaint, 330
Whole years shalt thou be witness, while I mourn,

And Ariana shall assist my woes.

Let fiercest vengeance now possess my soul.

He said, and ardent rushes on the Greek,
Who, while his noble enemy expir'd, 335
And Hyperanthes snatch'd with tender arms
The last embraces from his gasping friend,
Stood near reclin'd in sadness o'er his shield,
And in the pride of victory repin'd,
Nor mark'd his threatening foe: when swift ap-
proach'd 340
Diomedon. Before the Thespian youth
Aloft he rais'd his targe, and loudly thus.

HOLD thee, Barbarian, from a life more worth,
Than thee, and Xerxes, with his host of slaves.

His words he seconds with his rapid lance. 345
Soon a tremendous conflict had ensu'd,
But Intaphernes, Mindus, and the half
Of Persia's leaders anxious for the life
Of Hyperanthes pour'd with all their bands

Betwixt

Betwixt th' encountring chiefs. With mutual wrath
They strove in vain the combat to renew. 351

So rage two bulls upon th' opposing banks
Of somē deep flood, which parts the fruitful mead;
Defiance thunders from their angry mouths

In vain; in vain the furrow'd earth they rend; 355

Wide rolls the stream, and intercepts the war.

The fierce Platæan satiates his revenge

On vulgar lives. Before his dreaded arm

Whole ranks are scatter'd. But the Persian prince

Borne down the stress of battle gains the shore, 360

Where then the brave Abrocomes advanc'd;

With him Orontes and Pharnuchus stood,

Mazæus, Abradates fam'd in arms,

And all the boldest of the eastern chiefs

Begirt with fresh battalions: here with speed 365

Abrocomes his brother thus bespake.

To Intaphernes is Pandates sent

With charge to harrass in perpetual fight

The Grecians next the mountains. Thou with me

And these unite thy valour. Here the flow'r 370

Of

Of all our army is together drawn,
 Here all the weight of battle will impend.
 He said. The godlike Hyperanthes seeks
 The dang'rous van. He heads the splendid throng
 Of satraps, princes, and imperial pow'rs; 375
 Themselves the lords of nations, who before
 The throne of Xerxes tributary bow'd.
 Now mix'd the war. Th' inverted javelins gleam
 From ev'ry part, and fell Bellona roars.

Who first distain'd with Persian blood his sword?
 Eupalamus. Artembares he slew 381
 And Derdas fierce, whom Caucasus had rear'd
 On its tempestuous brow, the savage sons
 Of violence and rapine; but their doom
 Great Hyperanthes marks: his angry lance 385
 Arrests the victor in his haughty course.
 Beneath the strong Abrocomes o'erwhelm'd,
 Melissus swells the number of the dead.
 None could Mycenæ boast of prouder birth
 Than young Melissus; blooming, as the son 390
 Of Maia, all in radiant arms he grac'd

The

The front of battle; he in Cirrha's vale,
Where high Parnassus with its double top
O'ershades the Pythian games, the envied prize
Of fame obtain'd: low sinks his laurell'd head 395
In death's cold night, and horrid gore deforms
His graceful locks. Impatient for revenge
Aristobulus strides before the van.
A storm of fury darkens all his brow.
Around he rolls his gloomy eye, and marks 400
Achæmenes for death, of regal blood
Deriv'd from Cræsus, once th' imperial lord
Of nations; him the nymphs of Halys wept,
When with delusive oracles beguyl'd
By Delphi's God, he pass'd their fatal waves 405
A mighty empire to dissolve: nor knew
Th' ill-destin'd king, that envious Fortune watch'd
That dreadful moment from his hand to wrest
The scepter of his fathers. In the shade
Of humble life his race on Tmolus' brow 410
Lay hid, 'till rous'd to battle here his breath
Achæmenes resigns. Then Lycis bled
For horrid war ill-chosen. He was skill'd

To

To tune the lulling flute, and melt the heart;
Or with his pipe's awak'ning strains invite 415
The lovely dames of Lydia to the dance:
They graceful o'er the verdant level mov'd
In varied measures, while the cooling breeze
Beneath their swelling garments wanton'd o'er
Their snowy breasts, and smooth Cayster's wave
Soft-gliding murmur'd by. His op'ning chest 421
Pours forth his entrails, and supine he falls.
Not long the Grecian triumphs. From the slain
In all the pride of conquest as he rends
His reeking javelin, Hyperanthes' steel 425
His knee invades, and bursts the sinewy cords.
The Mycenæans with uplifted shields,
Corinthians, and Phliasians gather round
The wounded Grecian. With redoubled rage 430
The conflict glows. Abrocomes incites
Each Persian leader; all obey his voice;
Here Abradates, there Mazæus press'd,
Orontes, and Hydarnes; none retire
From toil, or peril: urg'd on ev'ry side
The Greeks at length th' abandon'd chief resign'd.

Despairing, raging, destitute he stands 436
Propt on his spear; his wound forbids retreat.
None, but his brother Eumenes, abide
The dire extremity. His shield defends
The fainting chief, till Hyperanthes' sword 440
Full on his arm its dreadful weight discharg'd.
Down with the buckler drops the sever'd hand,
Nor quits its grasp. Now sink the wretched pair
Beneath the Persian's unresisted steel:
From both their breasts the vital currents flow; 445
And mix their streams. Elate the Persians roll
Their deepning legions on the foes dismay'd.
The Greeks their station painfully maintain:
This soon the faithless Anaxander saw,
When thus to Leontiades he spake. 450

THIS is the time to aid our Persian friends.
Behold the Greeks are press'd. Let Thebes retire,
And yield a bloodless conquest to the king.

THE Thebans straight desert the broken line
Not with unpunish'd treachery; the spears 455

Of

Of fierce Orontes, and Pharnuchus join'd
With Mindus gor'd their shameful flight, and thin'd
Their bleeding files. Meantime, as he who rul'd
Than Jove more ancient on the throne of heav'n,
When from the womb of Chaos dark the world
Emerg'd to birth, where'er he view'd the jar 461
Of atoms yet discordant and unform'd,
Confusion thence with pow'rful voice dispell'd,
Till light and order universal reign'd;
So from the wall Leonidas explor'd 465
The various war. He saw the Theban rout,
That Corinth, Phlius, and Mycenæ look'd
Affrighted backward; instantly he charg'd
The sons of Lacedæmon to repair
The disunited phalanx. E'er they move 470
Dieneces inspires them. Fame, my friends,
Calls forth your valour in a signal hour;
For you this glorious period she reserv'd
To vindicate the Spartan name. He spake,
On either side supported by the might 475
Of Agis and of Alpheus he conducts
His gen'rous troop, who riveting their shields

In dense array indissolubly firm
 Confront the Persians, and with death repulse 180
 Their scatter'd numbers; when with efforts vain
 They oft renew'd the contest, and recoil'd 481
 As oft confounded with diminish'd ranks,
 Thus Hyperanthes counsell'd. Learn, O chiefs,
 From whence alone success can grace our arms.
 These are a band selected from the Greeks, 485
 Unlike the others, whom we lately chas'd;
 Perhaps the Spartans, whom we oft have heard
 By Demaratus prais'd. To break their line
 False is the hope, while unarray'd, and lax,
 And wanting union singly we assail 490
 Their strength collected. Do not we preside
 O'er Asia's myriads, and our valour boast,
 And martial arts above the vulgar herd?
 Let us, ye chiefs, attempt in order'd ranks
 To join our force, and emulate the foe. 495

475 THEY wait not dubious. Soon a dreadful line
 From Oeta's mountain to the shore extends,
 Compos'd of all the leaders, Mindus bold,

Pharnuchus, and Mazæus, and the strength
Of fierce Abrocomes, with each, who bore 500
The highest honours, and excell'd in war.

To these succeed a chosen number drawn
From those, whom Asia boasts her bravest sons,
Who from their king perpetual stipends share;
And, station'd round his provinces, by arms 505
His tyranny sustain. In ev'ry part
Is Hyperanthes seen with active care
To form the huge battalion. Soon they stand
In just array, when cautious, lest their march
Might still relax their order, Persia's prince 510
Amid the center of the foremost rank
Orontes plac'd, committing to his hand
Th' imperial standard; whose expanded folds
Glow'd in the air, presenting to the sun
The richest dye of Tyre: the royal bird 515
Amid the gorgeous tincture shone express
In flaming gold. On this the eastern chief
Commands each Persian station'd in the front
To turn his eyes regardful, and to guide
His slow and equal feet by this alone 520

Retiring,

Retiring, or advancing. Next he charg'd,
That ev'ry warriour through the num'rous files,
Observing none but those before him rang'd,
Should watch their motions, and their steps pursue.
Close by the standard then th' intrepid chief 525
His post assumes, and animates the band.

ILLUSTRIOS warriours, whose unconquer'd arms
Rebellious Ægypt, and the Libyan felt,
Think what the splendour of your former deeds
From you demands; remember, from the great 530
Heroic actions are a debt to fame.
No middle course remains for them to tread
Whom she hath once ennobled; and this hour
Or with fresh trophies will enlarge your praise,
Or will for ever with dishonour blast. 535

THE hero said, and all to fight proceed.
As when tempestuous Eurus stems the weight
Of western Neptune struggling through the straits,
Which bound Alcides' labours; here the storm
With rapid wing reverberates the tide, 540

There the contending surge with furrow'd tops
To mountains swells, and whelming o'er the beach
On either coast invests with hoary foam.

The Mauritanian and Iberian strand:

Not with less rage in hideous onset meet 545

The Grecians and Barbarians. These preserve
Their foremost ranks unbroken, where was drawn
The prime of Asia's warriours; and the croud,
Though still promiscuous pouring from behind,
Yet added pressure to th' imbattled chiefs. 550

With endless numbers. Like the mural strength
Of some proud city bulwark'd round, and arm'd
With rising tow'rs to guard her wealthy stores;
Immoveable, impenetrable stood
The ferried phalanx of the Greeks. Behind, 555
Their country spread, their fields with plenty
crown'd,

Thier native walls and habitations lay
With each dear pledge of friendship and of love.
High in the Persian van th' exalted lance
Of Hyperanthes flam'd. Beside him press'd
Abrocomes, Hydarnes, and the bulk 560

Of Abradates terrible in war.
 And here the great Dieneces upheld
 His shield's expanded surface, and alone
 Firm, as a Memphian pyramid, sustain'd 565
 The stress of thousands. Alpheus here unmov'd,
 And Agis there connect their spacious orbs,
 With Menalippus wise Megistias' heir
 In one impervious line. Long time the hosts
 Maintain in strong and unrelax'd array 570
 The conflict undecided; nor could Greece
 Repel the adverse numbers, nor the force
 Of Asia's myriads could remove the Greeks.

BUT now from Sparta's king, who soon discern'd
 The Persians new arrangement, Medon hastens, 575
 Th' illustrious chief of Locris, from the race
 Of Ajax sprung in Trojan fields renown'd:
 To wise Dieneces he thus began.

LEONIDAS commands the Grecian line *
 To yield before the Persians, and with speed 580
 To measure back some paces. Soon, he deems,
 The unexperienc'd foe in wild pursuit

150 L E O N I D A S. Book V.

Will break their order. Then the charge renew;
Let Agis, join'd with Alpheus, from the line
Rush with Laconia's troop imbatuled deep, 585
And force a passage through the Barb'rous host;
Thou with a strong battalion from the sons
Of Locris drawn must follow swift, and reach
The Spartans led by Agis; with the rest
Of Locris' youth shall I advance to fill 590
Your vacant station, and the line maintain;
While in the narrow entrance, where the pass
Looks o'er the Malian plain on Persia's camp,
Do thou arrange to intercept the foe,
Should Asia pour fresh succours from her tents: 595
Then Xerxes soon the slaughter shall deplore
Of all these thousands in the straits inclos'd
For sure destruction; and the gods of Greece
Behold their temples with profusion grac'd
Of splendid off'rings from Barbarian spoils 600
Won by their free-born supplicants this day.

This heard, Dieneces obedient gave
Through ev'ry band the signal of retreat,

When

When all at once drew backward. Persia stop'd,
As with amazement roadet to the earth 605
At unexpected conquest; 'till the voice
Of fierce Abrócomes their minds awakes
With these triumphant accents. By the sun,
They fly before us. My victorious friends,
Delay you then to enter Greece? Away, 610
Rush on undaunted. I already hear
Our horse and chariots thund'ring o'er their plains,
And view their towns involv'd in Persian fires.

He said. With hurried violence they roll
Tumultuous forward. All with headlong pace 615
Wide from their ranks expatiate in pursuit,
Disjoin their order, and the line dissolve.
This when the sage Dieneces descries,
The Grecians halt returning to the charge 620
With sudden onset. In a moment, pierc'd
By Lacedæmon's chief, Orontes falls,
And quits th' imperial banner; this the Greek
In triumph waves, and gives the dreadful sign.
At once with Agis tow'ring in the front, 625

And rapid Alpheus all Laconia's band

625

In deep arrangement bursting from the line

Bear down with irresistible career

The eastern legions shatter'd and o'erturn'd

With all their standards trampled on the plain.

As the swift vessel, when a rising gale

630

Distends the canvas, its resistless course

Impells through millions of opposing waves;

Through the Barbarian multitudes so pierc'd

The Spartan wedge. Invincible o'er hills

Of arms, and mangled corse they impress

635

Their crimson footsteps. Persia's bravest chiefs,

Ev'n Hyperanthes from the line is driv'n;

And flying thousands through the pass are swept

Before the Spartans. With a Locrian troop

Of hideous depth Dieneces pursues

640

His conqu'ring friends, and hews his purple way

Through Asia's numbers, which again were clos'd

In vain: himself unconquerable leads

Destruction on, and heaps the rock with death.

But on the broken foe what ruin falls

645

From Alpheus' sword? O'er all in swift pursuit

Was

Was he renown'd. His rapid feet had match'd
The son of Peleus in the dusty course,
Or had he run for Atalanta's love,
He had rejected Cytherea's aid; 650
Nor of her swiftness to beguile the fair
Before her steps had thrown the golden balls.
But now the wrongs, the long-remember'd wrongs
Of Polydorus animate his strength
With tenfold vigour; guided by revenge 655
His falchion reddens with Barbarian blood;
The gory drops besprinkled all his shield,
Like crimson poppies o'er the yellow plain.
As, when with horrour wing'd a whirlwind rends
A shatter'd navy, from the ocean cast, 660
Th' enormous fragments hide the sandy beach:
Thus o'er the rock the Persians lay bestrewn
By Alpheus raging in the swift pursuit.
Not with severer pangs the god of day
The Theban queen afflicted, when incens'd 665
With her proud vaunts he hurl'd her blooming race
From youth and beauty to the pale abodes;
Than now distracted Hyperanthes' soul,

As round him, bleeding by the Spartan's lance
His noblest friends lay gasping. Oft he strove 670
To turn his flying legions, oft the fight
With Abradates and his brother's force
Renews, against insuperable foes
In vain repugnant; till, by all around
Deserted, mixing with the gen'ral rout 675
He yields to fortune and the field forsakes.
So with relapsing waves the ebbing tide
Beats for a time against the shelving strand,
Still by degrees retiring, and at last
Within the bosom of the main subsides. 680

Now at Thermopylæ's extremest bound
The Spartans check'd their progress. Soon approach'd
Dieneces, and thus began. Behold,
What numbers have we pass'd of Persia's sons.
Be swift, my friends, and form. He said, and fill'd
The narrow straits with order'd files, a depth 686
Of fifty warriours; half on Asia's host,
Half tow'r'd the pass were turn'd, a double front,
Where ev'ry ranck with twenty javelins flam'd,

The

The Locrian band to Agis assign'd, 690
Who stands prepar'd to stop the flying foes;
Dieneces himself to Persia's camp
Presents the terrors of the Spartan steel.

Now, Muse, the wond'rous stratagem display,
Which Sparta's hero, whose presiding care 695
Mark'd all the great vicissitudes of fight,
And rul'd the course of slaughter, had conceiv'd
To whelm the num'rous, long-resisting foe
In hideous death, and signalize the day
With horrores new to war. As o'er the wall, 700
His constant station, darting through the straits
His watchful eye, e'er yet the battle clos'd,
He view'd the hostile myriads swarming down,
And nations still succeeding from the camp
Immense, exhaustless, by an horrid length 705
Of clust'ring helms, and shields, and threatning spears
Join'd to the Grecian van; the wary chief,
Left by the long-protracted fight his Greeks
Might yield o'erlabour'd, from the Locrians chose
A thousand warriours. These by Maron led, 710

Ascend

Ascend the mountain, which o'erhung the pass.
His charge he soon reveals. A thousand hands
At once with restless pains assemble stones
Of hugest bulk, and wither'd trunks upturn
In elder times by whirlwinds from the grove. 715
Unwearied then they loosen from the rocks
Broad, craggy fragments; from the mountain hew
Its venerable firs, and aged oaks
Of wide circumference, and knotted strength,
Which of their branches by the lightning bared,
Presented still against its blasting flame 721
Their hoary pride unshaken. These the Greeks
Roll heavy on, with massy leavers heave,
Or drag with strong-knit cables, till they reach,
Where o'er the Persian multitudes inclin'd. 725
The mountain's edge; so lofty, that the voice
Of war below there lost its deafning roar,
And soften'd into murmurs. Still his post,
Though Hyperanthes from the field was driv'n,
With thronging numbers Intaphernes bold 730
Beneath the shade of this incumbent hill
Against the fierce Diomedon maintain'd;

Great Intaphernes, progeny of kings,
 Whom o'er Damascus, and the Syrian palms
 Had Xerxes seated with despotic sway 735
 His substitute. This Maron from on high
 Surveys, and gives the signal; downward sinks
 The nodding pile, stupendous heap of death!
 Trees roll'd on trees with mingled rock descend,
 Unintermitt'd ruin. Loud resound 740
 The hollow trunks against the mountain's side,
 Swift bounds each craggy mass. The foes beneath
 Look up aghast, with horrour shrink, and die;
 Whole legions crush'd beneath the dreadful heaps
 Lie hid and lost, as never they had known 745
 A name, or being; while around them grew
 An hill of ruin. Numbers still survive,
 Who shun destruction with impetuous flight;
 But Agis stops them; Intaphernes falls
 Before his thund'ring arm. Again they turn 750
 To meet resistless ruin. From behind
 With twice two hundred Locrians Agis pours.

MEANTIME the Grecian line (so Sparta's king
 Decreed) had left its station, and beyond

The

The heaps of dreadful carnage was advanc'd; 755
There, stretch'd from Oeta to the Malian bay,
The Locrians led by Medon had dispos'd,
With Corinth, Phlius and Mycenæ's train
Their hostile phalanx o'er the less'ning pass.
Along the mountain's side Platæa's troop, 760
The Mantinæans, and Tegæans stood,
An horrid length of war. Th' unwearied swords
Of Dithyrambus and Diomedon
Still blaz'd the terror of the Barb'rous host.
Before them fled the Persians to the shore, 765
All in a moment by the various bands
Of Greece surrounded. From the gulph profound
Perdition here inevitable frowns,
And there, incircled by a grove of spears,
They stand devoted hecatombs to Mars. 770
Now not a moment's interval delays
Their gen'ral doom, but down the Malian steep
Prone are they hurried to th' expanded arms
Of Horrour rising from the op'ning deep,
And grasping all their numbers, as they fall. 775
The dire confusion, like a storm, invades

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The chafing billows; loud resounds the shore:
And o'er whole troops by fell Bellona roll'd
In one vast ruin from the craggy ridge,
O'er all their arms and ensigns deep ingulph'd,
With hideous roar the surge for ever clos'd. 781

End of the fifth Book.

LEONI-

LEONIDAS.

BOOK VI.

The Argument.

Night coming on, the Grecians retire to their tents. A guard is plac'd on the Phocian wall under the command of Agis. He admits into the camp a lady accompanied by a single slave, and conducts them to Leonidas; when she discovers herself to be Ariana, sister of Xerxes and Hyperanthes, and sues for the body of Teribazus; which being found among the slain, she kills herself upon it. The slave, who attended her, proves to be Polydorus, brother of Alpheus and Maron, and who had been formerly carried into captivity by a Phœnician pirate. He relates before an assembly of the chiefs a message from Demaratus to the Spartans, which discloses the treachery of the Thebans, and of Epialtes, the Malian, who had undertaken to lead part of

the Persian army through a pass among the mountains of Oeta. This information throws the council into a great tumult, which is pacified by Leonidas, who sends Alpheus to observe the motions of these Persians, and Dieneces with a party of Lacedæmonians to support the Phocians, with whom the defence of these passages in the hills had been intrusted. In the mean time Agis sends the bodies of Teribazus and Ariana to the camp of Xerxes.

IN sable pomp with all her starry train
The night assum'd her throne. Recall'd from
war,
Her long - protracted labours Greece forgets,
Dissolv'd in silent slumber ; all but those,
Who watch'd th' uncertain perils of the dark, 5
An hundred warriours : Agis was their chief.
High on the wall intent the hero sat,
As o'er the surface of the tranquil main
Along its undulating breast the wind
The various din of Asia's host convey'd 10
In one deep murmur swelling in his ear :
When, by the sound of footsteps down the pass

Alarm'd, he calls aloud. What feet are those,
Which beat the echoing pavement of the rock?
With speed reply, nor tempt your instant fate. 15

He said, and thus return'd a voice unknown.
Not with the feet of enemies we come,
But crave admittance with a friendly tongue.

THE Spartan answers. Through the midnight
shade 19

What purpose draws your wandring steps abroad?

To whom the stranger. We are friends to Greece,
And to the presence of the Spartan king
Admission we implore. The cautious chief
Of Lacedæmon hesitates again;
When thus with accents musically sweet 25
A tender voice his wondring ear allur'd.

O GEN'ROUS Grecian, listen to the pray'r
Of one distres'd! whom grief alone hath led
In this dark hour to these victorious tents,
A wretched woman innocent of fraud. 30

THE

THE Greek descending through th' unfolded
gates

Upheld a flaming brand. One first appear'd
In servile garb attir'd; but near his side
A woman graceful and majestic stood;
Not with an aspect rivalling the pow'r 35
Of fatal Hellen, or the wanton charms
Of love's soft queen; but such as far excell'd,
Whate'er the lilly blending with the rose
Paints on the cheek of beauty soon to fade;
Such as express'd a mind, which wisdom rul'd, 40
And sweetnes temper'd, virtue's purest light
Illumining the countenance divine,
Yet could not sooth remorseless fate, nor teach
Malignant fortune to revere the good,
Which oft with anguish rends the spotless heart,
And oft associates wisdom with despair. 46
In courteous phrase began the chief humane.

EXALTED fair, who thus adorn'st the night,
Forbear to blame the vigilance of war,
And to the laws of rigid Mars impute, 50

That I thus long unwilling have delay'd
 Before the great Leonidas to place
 This your apparent dignity and worth.

He spake, and gently to the lofty tent
 Of Sparta's king the lovely stranger guides. 55
 At Agis' summons with a mantle broad
 His mighty limbs Leonidas infolds,
 And quits his couch. In wonder he surveys
 Th' illustrious virgin, whom his presence aw'd:
 Her eye submissive to the ground inclin'd 60
 With veneration of the godlike man.
 But soon his voice her anxious dread dispell'd,
 Benevolent and hospitable thus.

Thy form alone, thus amiable and great,
 Thy mind delineates, and from all commands 65
 Supreme regard. Relate, thou noble dame,
 By what relentless destiny compell'd,
 Thy tender feet the paths of darkness tread.
 Rehearse th' afflictions, whence thy virtue mourns.

ON her wan cheek a sudden blush arose, 70
 Like day's first dawn upon the twilight pale,
 And wrapt in grief these words a passage broke.

If to be most unhappy, and to know,
 That hope is irrecoverably fled;
 If to be great and wretched may deserve 75
 Commiseration from the good; behold,
 Thou glorious leader of unconquer'd bands,
 Behold descended from Darius' loins
 Th' afflicted Ariana, and my pray'r
 Accept with pity, nor my tears disdain! 80
 First, that I lov'd the best of human race,
 By nature's hand with ev'ry virtue form'd,
 Heroic, wise, adorn'd with ev'ry art;
 Of shame unconscious does my heart reveal.
 This day in Grecian arms conspicuous clad 85
 He fought, he fell. A passion long conceal'd
 For me alas! within my brother's arms
 His dying breath resigning, he disclos'd.
 —Oh I will stay my sorrows! will forbid
 My eyes to stream before thee, and my heart, 90

Thus full of anguish, will from sighs restrain !
For why should thy humanity be griev'd
With my distress, and learn from me to mourn
The lot of nature doom'd to care and pain !
Hear then, O king, and grant my sole request, 95
To seek his body in the heaps of slain.

THUS to the Spartan su'd the regal maid
Resembling Ceres in majestic woe,
When, suppliant at Jove's resplendent throne,
From dreary Pluto, and th' infernal gloom 100
Her lov'd and lost Preserpina she sought:
Fix'd on the weeping queen with stedfast eyes,
Laconia's chief these tender thoughts recall'd.

SUCH are thy sorrows, O for ever dear !
Who now at Lacedæmon dost deplore 105
My everlasting absence ! then inclin'd
His head, and sigh'd; nor yet forgot to charge
His friend, the gentle Agis, through the straits
The Persian princess to attend and aid.
With careful steps they seek her lover's corse. 110

The

Book VI. L E O N I D A S. 167

The Greeks remember'd, where by fate repress'd
His arm first ceas'd to mow their legions down,
And from beneath a mass of Persian slain
Soon drew the hero by his armour known.

To Agis' high pavilion they resort. 115

Now, Ariana, what transcending pangs
Thy soul involv'd? What horror clasp'd thy heart?
But love grew mightiest, and her beautous limbs
On the cold breast of Teribazus threw
The grief-distracted maid. The clotted gore 120
Deform'd her snowy bosom. O'er his wounds
Loose flow'd her hair, and bubbling from her eyes
Impetuous sorrow lav'd the purple clay.
When forth in groans her lamentations broke.

O torn for ever from my weeping eyes! 125

Thou, who despairing to obtain her heart,
Who then most lov'd thee, didst untimely yield
Thy life to fate's inevitable dart
For her, who now in agony unfolds
Her tender bosom, and repeats her vows 130
To thy deaf ear, who fondly to her own

Now clasps thy breast insensible and cold.

Alas! do those unmoving, ghastly orbs
Perceive my gushing anguish! Does that heart,
Which death's inanimating hand hath chill'd, 135
Share in my suff'rings, and return my sighs!

—Oh! bitter unsurmountable distres!

Lo! on thy breast is Ariana bow'd,
Hangs o'er thy face, unites her check to thine
Not now to listen with enchanted ears 140
To thy persuasive eloquence, no more
Charm'd with the wisdom of thy copious mind!

SHE could no more. Invincible despair
Suppress'd her utt'rance. As a marble form
Fix'd on the solemn sepulcher, unmov'd 145
O'er some dead hero, whom his country lov'd, |
Bends down the head with imitated woe:
So paus'd the princess o'er the breathless clay,
Intranc'd in sorrow. On the dreary wound,
Where Dithyrambus' sword was deepest plung'd,
Mute for a space and motionless, she gaz'd. 151
Then with a look unchang'd, nor trembling hand

Drew

Drew forth a poniard, which her garment veil'd,
 And sheathing in her heart th' abhorred steel,
 On her slain lover, silent sinks in death. 155
 In vain the Spartan interven'd. With tears
 He view'd the prostrate lovers, and exclaim'd.

Oh! most unhappy, heavy on your heads
 Hath sorrow fall'n, which o'er your pale remains
 Commands this pity from a stranger's eye! 160
 Illustrious ruins, may the grave impart
 That peace, which life denied! And now receive
 This pious office from a hand unknown.

So saying, from his shoulders he unclasp'd
 His ample robe, and strew'd the waving folds 165
 O'er the pale dead. Then turning, he bespake
 The slave, who stood beside him. Thou, who ledst
 Thy queen ill-destin'd to the fatal tents
 Of Lacedæmon, now returning bear
 Her bleeding reliques to the Persian lord; 170
 Thou, and these captives, whom I free from bonds.

ART thou a Spartan (interrupts the slave)
 And dost thou counsel me to seek again
 A clime unbless'd, where freedom never dwells?
 No. Bear me to Leonidas. Alone 175
 Shall he decide, if wretched, as I seem,
 I may not claim protection from this camp.

WHOE'ER thou art (amaz'd the chief replies)
 Thou may'st indeed a better lot demand,
 Than I, a stranger to thy hidden worth, 180
 Unconscious offer'd. Thy ignoble garb
 Conceal'd a virtue, which I now revere.
 And since thy suff'ring soul hath long indur'd
 The gloom of bondage, and the hated face 184
 Of tyrants view'd, now change the horrid scene;
 Here freedom reigns, and justice: come and seek
 With me their great protector. Ending here,
 Swift he conducts him to Laconia's king,
 When Agis thus Leonidas address'd. 189

Lo! far superiour to the name, which marks
 His habit with dishonour, one, who syes

For

Book VI. L E O N I D A S. 171

For thy protection! Here the slave subjoin'd.
I stand thy suppliant now. Thou soon shalt learn,
If I deserve thy favour. I intreat
To see th' assembled leaders of your host, 195
For I am fraught with tydings, which import
The weal of all the Grecians. Agis freight,
Appointed by Leonidas, convenes
The various leaders. To the tent they throng,
Amidst them plac'd, the stranger thus began. 200

O ALPHEUS! Maron! hither turn your sight,
And know your brother. From their seats they start.
From either burst, with tears of transport mix'd
The name of Polydorus. On his breast
Each fondly strives to rush, but he withstands; 205
While down his cheek a stream of anguish pours
From his dejected eyes in torture bent
On that vile garb, which sham'd his freeborn limbs.
At length these accents intermix'd with groans
Broke from his heart, while all stood wond'ring
round. 210

You

You first shall know, if this unhappy slave
Yet merits your embraces. Now approach'd
Leonidas. Before him all recede,
Ev'n Alpheus' self, and yields his brother's hand,
Which in his own the gen'rous hero press'd; 215
Then with majestic goodnes thus bespake
Th' afflicted youth, and mitigates his pains.

FORBEAR to mourn, thou unexampled youth.
Thy friends, thy country, all on thee shall gaze
With veneration, whose unshaken mind 220
The chains of Asia never could debase.
Lo! ev'ry breast is open to thy worth,
Each tongue prepares to hail thee with applause,
Who hast thy country honour'd ev'n in bonds.]

He ceas'd when Alpheus with an eager hand
Divests his brother of his base attire, 226
And his own mantle o'er the shoulders threw
Of Polydorus. Agis too advanc'd,
With friendly arms infolds him, and began.

Now

Now, in thy native liberty secure, 230
Smile on thy past afflictions, and relate,
What chance restor'd thy virtue to the Greeks.

THEN Polydorus to the list'ning chiefs.

I was a Spartan. When my tender prime
On manhood border'd, from my native shore 235
Snatch'd by Phœnician pirates, I was sold,
To Ariana, sister to the king
And Hyperanthes. Fortune there was kind
My bonds committing to that gentle hand.
Yet was I still a captive, and estrang'd 240
From Lacedæmon. Demaratus oft
With friendly sorrows would my lot deplore,
Nor less his own ill-fated virtue mourn'd
Lost to his country in a servile court,
The center of corruption; where in smiles 245
Is envy painted, treachery, and hate,
And ranckling malice; where alone sincere
The dissolute seeks no disguise: where he,
Who all possesses, that a king can give,
Is far less happy than the meanest son 250

Of

Of liberty, and groveling, as the slave,
Who serves his cruel pride. Yet here the sun
Ten times his annual period hath renew'd,
Since Polydorus hath in bondage groan'd.

My bloom now past, or else by pining care 255
Untimely wither'd, I at last return,
And to my native land the tydings bear
Of instant desolation. Here in grief
He paus'd, when thus Leonidas. Proceed.
Though from thy lips inevitable fate 260
To all be threaten'd, thou art heard by none,
Whose dauntless souls can entertain a thought,
But how to fall the noblest. Thus the chief.
The rest in speechless expectation wait.
Such was the solemn silence, which o'erspread 265
The shrine of Ammon, or Dodona's shades,
When anxious mortals from the mouth of Jove
Their doom explor'd. Nor Polydorus long
Suspends the Grecians, but resumes his tale.

As I this night accompanied the steps 270
Of Ariana, e'er we reach'd the straits

Before

Before our view then op'ning, one appear'd
With hasty feet now traversing the way,
Now fix'd intensely tow'rds the Grecian wall;
Then on a sudden starting would renew 275
His restless pace. As nearer we approach'd,
He by the moon, which glimmer'd o'er our heads,
Descried us, when advancing he demands
Where bent our midnight course. I knew the voice
Of Demaratus. To my breast I clasp'd 280
The venerable exile, and replied.
Our purpose ask not. Sparta's camp we seek,
And oh! farewell for ever! He rejoin'd.
Thrice happy Polydorus! Thou again
Shalt visit Sparta to these eyes denied. 285
Upon your paths may heav'n's protection smile.
Soon as you mix with yon triumphant tents,
Say to the Spartans, whose unconquer'd arms
Defend those rocks, you saw their exil'd king;
Say, though their blind credulity depriv'd 290
Te wretched Demaratus of his home,
From ev'ry joy secluded, which awaits
The parent and the husband, from his wife,

His

His offspring torn, his friends, and native gates,
Him from his virtue could they ne'er divide: 295
Say, that ev'n here, where all are kings, or slaves,
Amid the riot of flagitious courts
Not quite extinct the Spartan spirit glows
Within his breast, though grief hath dim'd its fires.
Remembering this to Lacedæmon's chief 300
Report, that newly to the Persian host
Return'd a Marian, Epialtes nam'd,
Who as a spy had sought the Grecian tents.
He to the tyrant magnified his art,
Which with delusive eloquence had wrought 305
The Greeks to such despair, that Asia's king
Had been e'er now their sov'reign master own'd,
Had not the spirit of their single chief,
By fear unconquer'd, and on death resolv'd,
Restor'd their valour: therefore would the king 310
Thrust to his guidance a selected band,
They soon should pierce th' unguarded bounds of
Greece,
Led through a secret passage o'er the hills,
Where no Leonidas should bar their way.

Meantime

Meantime by him the treach'rous Thebans sent
 Assurance of their aid. Th' afflenting king 316
 At once decreed two myriads to advance
 With Hyperanthes, with Abrocomes,
 And bold Hydarnes. Ev'ry chief besides,
 Whom youth, or valour, or ambition warms, 320
 Rous'd by the traitor's eloquence, attends
 From all the nations, fir'd with eager zeal
 Teh first to enter Greece. In silence now
 The youth remains. Tremendous from his seat
 Uprose Platæa's chief. His eyes were flames, 325
 And thus on trembling Anaxander burst
 The furious accents from his livid lips.

YET e'er we fall, O traitor, shall this arm
 To hell's avenging furies sink thy head.

ALL now is tumult, ev'ry bosom swells 330
 With rage untam'd, and vengeance. Half unsheathe'd
 Diomedon's impetuous falchion blaz'd.
 But, as the Cholchian forcerefs renown'd
 In fables old, or Circe, when they fram'd

A potent spell from Erebus to wake

335

The dead in dark and fleeting forms to glide

Before the moon's dim twilight, with their charms

Smooth'd all the sea, and silenc'd each rude blast;

Till not a billow heav'd against the shore,

Nor ev'n the wanton-winged zephyr breath'd

340

The lightest whisper through the magic air:

So, when thy voice, Leonidas, is heard,

Fell Discord listens; Rage with sacred awe

Subsides in silence; while Confusion slept.

WITHHOLD this rashness (interpos'd the king)

Before we punish, let us find the guilt.

346

Not yet hath Persia overturn'd our tents,

Not yet her Barb'rous shouts our ears alarm.

We still have time for vengeance, and to know,

If yet our swords destruction may repel,

350

Or how to die most glorious. Then arose

Dieneces, and thus the Greeks bespake.

Ever yet they pass our border, Xexes' host

Must learn to conquer, and the Greeks to fly.

The

Book VI. LEONIDAS.

179

The spears of Phocis guard the secret pass. 355

Let instant messengers be thither sent

To know the Persians progress. Alpheus here.

LEONIDAS, behold, my willing feet

Shall to the Phocians bear thy great commands,

Or climb the hills to mark th' approaching foe. 360

Thou active son of valour (thus returns

The chief of Lacedæmon) in my thoughts

For ever present, when the public cause

Demands the swift, the vigilant, and bold!

Go and surmount the rochs aerial height. 365

And while, around, Dieneces conducts

An hundred Spartans to the Phocians aid,

Thou from the hills observe the Persians march.

BEFORE the purple-winged morn the night

Retiring warn'd their conference to cease. 370

They all disperse. When hastning on his course

And ready now to climb the lofty crags,

O Polydorus, Alpheus thus exclaims,

180 L E O N I D A S. Book VI.

Long lost and late recover'd! we must part
 Once more, and now for ever. Thou return, 375
 And kiss the sacred soil, which gave thee birth,
 Which calls thee back to freedom? Dearest youth,
 I should have tears to give thee—but farewell!
 My country chides me loit'ring in thy arms.

THIS said, he quits his brother, and ascends, 380
 While Polidorus answers. Alpheus, no.
 I have the marks of bondage to erase,
 My blood must wash the shameful stain away.

WE have a father (Maron interpos'd)
 Thy unexpected presence will revive 385
 His heavy age, that childless else will mourn.
 Here Polydorus with a gloomy smile.

ILL should I comfort others. View these eyes;
 Faint is their light, and vanish'd is my bloom
 Before its hour of ripeness. In my breast 390
 Grief as a native will for ever dwell,
 Nor yield to time. Unceasing shall my soul

Brood

Brood o'er the dire remembrance of my youth
 In servitude thus wasted. Life with me
 Hath lost its favour. Then in silent woe 395
 He hangs his head. His brother pleads in vain.
 He answers only with repeated groans.
 Now in his view Dieneces advanc'd
 With Sparta's band. On them his eyes are fix'd
 Immoveable, and thus his mind revolves. 400

I too, like these, in Lacedæmon sprung,
 Instructed once, like these, to poise the spear,
 And lift the pond'rous shield. Ill destin'd wretch!
 Thy arm is now enervate, and would fail
 Beneath the buckler's weight. O cruel Heav'n! 405
 Who didst compel my free-born hand to change
 The warriour's arms for ignominious bonds;
 Wouldst thou compensate for my chains, my shame,
 My ten years sorrows, and the black despair,
 Which on my youth has prey'd; propitious once
 Grant, I may bear my buckler to the field, 411
 And known a Spartan seek the shades below.

He ceas'd, and sudden turn'd his steps aside
 To find the tent of Agis; there the youth
 With grateful sorrow ministers his aid, 415
 While with a kind and hospitable hand
 The gentle Agis by her lover's corse
 On one sad bier the pallid beauties laid
 Of Ariana. He from shackles frees
 Two Persian captives, whom his gen'rous arm 420
 That day preferr'd from slaughter, then began.

To you I give that freedom, which you sought
 To snatch from me. This recompense I ask,
 And this alone. Transport to Asia's camp
 These bleeding reliques; bid the Persian king 425
 Weep o'er this flow'r thus blasted in its pride;
 Then say, th' all-judging gods have thus ordain'd:
 Thou, whose ambition o'er the groaning earth
 Leads desolation, o'er the nations spreads
 Calamity and tears, thou first shalt mourn, 430
 And through thy house destruction first shall range.

Thus charg'd, to Asia's host the captives bend.
 They soon attain the Phocian wall, where now

Was Dithyrambus station'd. He perceives
The mournful bier approach. To him the fate 435
Of Ariana was already told.

He meets the captives, when, with weeping eyes
On Teribazus turn'd, he thus exclaims.

O! As thy arms present thee, hadst thou been
Indeed a Grecian! then thy gen'r'rous heart 440
Its valour ne'er had wasted to support
A king's injustice; then a gentler fate,
Had bles'd thy life, or bleeding thou hadst known,
How sweet is death for liberty. A Greek
This friendly wish affords thee, though his head 445
Had lost the honours gather'd from thy fall;
When fortune favour'd, or propitious heav'n
Smil'd on the better cause. Ill-fated pair!
Whom with this stream of pity here I lave;
But that my hostile hands imbru'd with gore 450
Must be ungrateful to your loathing shades,
From all the neighb'ring valleys would I cull
Their fairest growth, and strew your hearse with
flow'rs.

Yet O accept these tears, and pious pray'rs!

May peace attend your ashes! may your shades 455
Pass o'er the silent pool to happier seats,
Where tyrants ne'er can enter to molest
The bissful region; but are far remov'd
To realms of horrour, where from righteous heav'n
They bear those pains, they merit from mankind!

He ceas'd in tears. The captives leave the wall,
And slowly down Thermopylk proceed. 462

End of the sixth Book.

LEONI.

LEONIDAS.

BOOK VII.

The Argument.

The bodies of Teribazus and Ariana are brought into the presence of Xerxes, soon after a report had reach'd the camp, that half his navy was shipwreck'd. The Persian monarch, quite dispirited, is persuaded by Argestes, one of the satraps, to send an ambassador to the Spartan king. Argestes himself is deputed, who, after revealing his embassy to Leonidas in secret, is by him led before the whole army, and there receives his answer. In the mean time Alpheus returns and declares, that the enemies were possess'd of the passages in the hills, and were hastening to Thermopylæ, upon which Leonidas offers to send away all the army except his three hundred Spartans; but Diomedon, Demophilus, Ditbyrambus, and Megistias refuse to depart: he

then dismisses Argestes, informs the Grecians of his design to attack the Persian camp in the night, and making all the necessary dispositions retires to his pavilion.

BEFORE the tent of Xerxes now arriv'd
The Persian captives. On with solemn pace
And slow they move. The monarch from afar
Descries their sad demeanour. They approach,
Nor he forbids. That morn had Rumour told 5
The loss of half his navy dash'd on rocks
By angry blasts, or buried in the surge.
Thus, when his bleeding sister met his eyes,
Already sunk in sadness, he had lost
His kingly pride, the parent of disdain, 10
And cold indifference for others woes;
Nor ev'n beside his sister's nobler corse
Her humble lover now his scorn awak'd.
In tears the captive's mournful tale he heard,
And then first knew compassion; but e'er long 15
Those traces vanish'd from the tyrant's breast:
His former gloom redoubles, for himself
His anxious bosom heaves, and now he fears,

Lest he with all his numbers should be cast
 A prey to Fortune. Near the monarch stood 20
 The Spartan exile, whom he thus bespake.

O DEMARATUS, what will fate ordain!
 Lo! Fortune turns against me! Who shall know,
 How far her daring malice may extend,
 Which rages now so near me, and hath made 25
 My house the seat of ruin? I have sent
 From my unshelter'd side my bravest chiefs,
 And choicest troops to pass the desert hill,
 Led by this Malian; may not there the Greeks
 With opposition more tremendous still 30
 And ruinous, than yester sun heheld,
 Resistless hold their craggy post; renew
 Their stony thunder with augmented rage,
 And send whole quarries down the rocky steep
 Again to crush my legions? Oh! unfold 35
 Thy secret soul, nor hide the harshest truth;
 Say what remains to hope? The exile here.

If truth unblam'd may issue from my lips,
 Too well, imperial Xerxes, you presage

What

What may befall your legions. If the Greeks 40
Arrang'd within Thermopylae, a pass
Accessible and spacious, could repel
With such destruction their unnumber'd foes;
What scenes of havoc must th' untrodden paths,
Confin'd among the craggy hills, afford? 45

IMMERS'D in care the monarch silent sat.
Amid th' incircling peers Argestes stood,
A potent prince. On Sipylus he reign'd,
Whose lofty summits overlook'd the waves
Of Hermus and Pactolus; either stream, 50
Enrich'd with golden sands, its tribute bore
To this great satrap: through the servile court
Yet was there none more practis'd in the arts
Of mean submission; none more skill'd to gain
The royal favour; none, who better knew 55
The phrase, the looks, and gesture of a slave.
In soothing words he thus the king bespake.

If Xerxes will to spare his faithful bands,
And not exert the terrors of his pow'r;
More gentle means of conquest than by arms, 60

Mor

Nor less secure may artifice supply.

Renown'd Darius, thy imperial fire,
Great in the spoil of kingdoms, long in vain
The fields of proud Euphrates with his host
O'erspread; at length confiding in the wiles 65
Of Zopyrus the mighty king subdu'd
The Babylonian tow'rs: but who shall count,
What num'rous states by policy have fall'n;
And let corruption once her aid impart,
Not one shall stand. What race of men posses 70
Such probity and wisdom, whom the veil
Of craft may blind not, nor corruption's charm
Seduce. O Xerxes, thou, whom heav'n hath rais'd
To more than mortal greatness, canst thou find
Through all thy empire, which from India's shore
Shall reach Eurotas soon, no dazzling gift 76
To gain the Grecian leader? O dispel
The cloud of sadness from those sacred eyes,
And proffer streight to Lacedæmon's chief,
What may thy own munificence declare, 80
And win his sword to aid thee. Xerxes here,
Rous'd from his trance of sorrow, swift replied.

Wise are thy words and counsels. Go, repair,
My faithful servant, to the Grecian chief;
Fall down before him; bid him join our arms, 85
And he shall reign o'er all the Grecian states.

At once Argestes leaves the monarch's side.
He now approaches to the Phocian wall.
Thence Dithyrambus leads him to the tent
Of Lacedæmon's king. Retreated there, 90
Alone the hero meditating sat
On future woes to Persia. At his feet
Prone bows Argestes, and begun. Thus low
Before thy awful presence Xerxes wills,
That I should bend me prostrate to the earth, 95
And thus accost thee. Great and matchless chief,
By fortune favour'd, and belov'd by heav'n,
Thus says the lord of Asia; join our arms,
And we reward thee with the sov'reign rule
O'er all the pow'rful states of haughty Greece. 100
And, O illustrious warriour, heed my words.
Think on the bliss of royalty, the pomp
Of courts, their endless pleasures, trains of slaves,

Who

Who restless watch for thee and thy delights,
With all the glories of unrivall'd sway. 105

Look on th' Ionic and Æolian Greeks,
From them their fantom, liberty, is flown,
While in each province, rais'd by Xerxes' hand,
Some favour'd chief presides (exalted state
Which envious freedom gives not) on his head 110
He bears the gorgeous diadem, and sees
His equals once now prostrate at his throne.

Yet how much greater thou, whom gen'ral Greece,
That teems with mightiest states, shall call her lord,
Thee only worthy. How will Greece rejoice 115
Around thy throne, and hail th' auspicious hour,
When thou, selected by the Persian king
To bless consenting nations with thy sway,
Didst calm the fury of unsparing war, 119
Which else had delug'd all with blood and flames!

He said. The chief replies not, but commands
The Thespian youth, who near the tent had watch'd,
To summon all the Grecians. He obeys.
While from his seat the hero mov'd, and bade

The

The Persian follow. He amaz'd attends, 125
 Surrounded soon by all the Grecian bands ;
 When him the godlike Spartan thus bespake.

HERE, Persian, tell thy ambaffy, repeat,
 That to obtain my friendship Asia's lord
 Bids me accept the sov'reignty of Greece; 130
 Then view this band, whose valour shall preserve
 That Greece unconquer'd, which your king bestows,
 And strew your bodies on its crimson plains :
 The indignation painted on their looks,
 And gen'rous scorn shall answer for their chief 135

THE hero ceas'd, when suddenly return'd
 The speed of Alpheus ; all suspended st freight
 On him direct their sight, who thus began.

EVER I could join the Phocians, from the hill,
 Which overhung the close defile, I view'd 140
 The pow'rs of Persia. Down the narrow st freight
 No sooner gleam'd th' innumerable spears,
 But by our angry destiny misled,

Or some curst dæmon, enemy to Greece,
 The Phocians quit their station. Through the pass
 An inundation of Barbarians pours, 146
 The traitor Epialtes is their guide,
 And to Thermopylæ directs their course.

He here concludes. Unutterable fear
 In horrid silence wrapt the list'ning throng, 150
 Aghast, confounded; silent too were those,
 Who knew no terror, yet with wonder mute,
 Thick-wedg'd inclos'd Leonidas around,
 Who thus with calmest elocution spoke.

I now behold my destiny compleat, 155
 And how at last Leonidas must die.
 Here with the Spartans shall I rest behind,
 While you, my faithful, brave allies, retreat.
 Then art thou near, thou glorious, sacred hour,
 Which shalt my country's liberty confirm! 160
 All hail! thou solemn period! thee the tongues
 Of Virtue, Fame, and Freedom shall record,
 And celebrate in ages yet unborn.

O

Then

Then, O farewell, Megistias wife and brave;
 Thou too experienc'd, venerable chief, 165
 Demophilus farewell: farewell to thee,
 Invincible Diomedon, to thee,
 Unequall'd Dithyrambus, and to all,
 You other dauntless warriours, who may claim
 Praise from my lips, and friendship from my heart.
 You after all the wonders, which your swords 171
 Have here accomplish'd, shall enrich your names
 With fresh renown. Your valour must compleat,
 What we begin. Here first th' astonish'd foe
 A dying Spartan shall with terrour view, 175
 And tremble, while he conquers; then, by fate
 Led from his dreadful victory disma'yd
 Against the phalanx of united Greece,
 By your unconquer'd spears himself shall fall.

HERE interpos'd the fierce Platæan chief. 180
 By the twelve gods enthron'd in heav'n supreme,
 By my fair name unsullied yet I swear,
 Ne'er shall thy eyes, Leonidas, behold
 Diomedon forsake thee. First let strength

Book VII. L E O N I D A S. 195

Desert my limbs, and valour shun my heart, 185

Did I not face the Marathonian war?

Have I not seen Thermopylae? O Fame,

What more canst thou bestow, or I receive?

Where can I living purchase brighter praise,

Than dying here? A more illustrious tomb 190

Where can I gain, than underneath the heaps

Of Persians fall'n the victims of our sword.

He ended, when Demophilus subjoin'd.

O KING of Sparta, pride of human race,
Whom none e'er equal'd, but the seed of Jove, 195

Thy own forefather number'd with the Gods,

Lo! I am old. With faltering steps I tread

The prone descent of years. The winged hours

By me, as one unequal to their speed,

Who can no more their fleeting joys attain, 200

Unheeding slide. My youth my country claim'd,

My age no more can serve her; what remains?

What eligible hope can wisdom form,

But to die well? Upon this glorious earth

With thee, unrivall'd hero, will I close 205

The eye of life. So spake the hoary chief,
 When Dithyrambus next. O first of Greeks,
 Me too think worthy to attend thy fame
 With this most dear and venerable man
 For ever honour'd from my tend'rest age, 210
 Ev'n till on life's extremity we part.
 Nor too aspiring let my hopes be deem'd;
 Should the Barbarian in his triumphs mark
 My youthful limbs among the gory heaps,
 Thence may his fears be doubled, when again 215
 He meets in fields hereafter to be known
 The Grecian standards, trembling at a foe,
 To whom the flow'r, and blooming joys of life
 Are less alluring than a noble fate.

To him Demophilus. Wilt thou too bleed, 220
 My Dithyrambus? — But I here withhold
 All counsel from thee, who art wise, as brave.
 If then thy magnanimity retain
 Thee too with great Leonidas to fall,
 At either's side our limbs shall press the ground, 225
 And drop together in the arms of Death;

Book VII L E O N I D A S. 197

So if th' attentive traveller we draw
To our cold reliques, wondring shall he trace
The diff'rent scene, and pregnant with applause,
O wise old man, exclaim, thou well hast chose 230
The hour of fate: and, O unequal'd youth,
Who to thy country didst thy bloom devote,
Mayst thou remain for ever dear to Fame!
May Time rejoice to name thee! and may Peace
With gentlest pinions hover o'er thy urn! 235

THIS said, the hero with his lifted shield
His face o'ershades, and drops a secret tear;
Not this the tear of anguish, but deriv'd
From fond affection grown mature with time;
Which in a feebler mind to pain had turn'd, 240
But in the Thespian's firm and virtuous breast,
Alone a manly tenderness awak'd
Unmix'd with pity, or with vain regret.

MEGISTIAS last address'd the Spartan chief.
Thou, whom the Gods have chosen to exalt 245
Above mankind in virtue and renown,

O call not me presumptuous, who implore
 Among these heroes thy regardful ear!
 To Lacedæmon I a stranger came.
 You there preserv'd me, there with honours clad;
 Nor have I yet one benefit repay'd. 251
 That now the gen'rous Spartans may behold
 In me their high beneficence not vain,
 Here to their cause I consecrate my breath.

Not so Megistias (interpos'd the king) 255
 Thou and thy son retreat. Again the feer.

FORBID it, thou eternally ador'd,
 O Jove, confirm my persevering soul!
 Nor let my fear neglect this happy hour
 To shew the Spartans, I deserv'd their care. 260
 Thou, Menalippus, hear the king's command,
 And my paternal tenderness revere.
 Do thou withdraw thee from me, to my hand
 Thy arms resigning. Fortune will supply
 Fresh toil for valour. Vanquish then, or find 265
 A glorious grave; but spare thy father's eye

The

The bitter anguish to behold thy youth 260
 Untimely bleed before him. Grief suspends 265
 His speech, and interchangeably their arms 270
 Impart their last embraces. Either wept, 275
 The hoary parent, and the blooming son. 280
 But from his temples the pontific wreath 285
 Megistias now unloosens, and resigns 290
 His hallow'd vestments; while the youth with tears
 The helmet buckles o'er his snowy locks, 295
 And on his breast adjusts the radiant mail. 300

While such contempt of life, such fervid zeal 310
 To die with glory animate the Greeks,
 Far other thoughts possess Argestes' soul. 315
 Amaze with mingled terror smote his heart; 320
 Cold drops, distill'd from ev'ry pore, bedew 325
 His shiv'ring limbs; his bosom pants; his knees 330
 Yield to their burthen; ghastly pale his cheeks,
 Pale are his lips and trembling: such the minds 335
 Of slaves corrupt, to them the beauteous face 340 285
 Of Virtue turns to horrour. But the chief 345 290
 Of Lacedæmon now the wretch bespake. 350 295

RETURN to Xerxes; tell him, on this rock
The Grecians faithful to their post await
His chosen myriads; tell him, thou hast seen, 290
How far the lust of empire is below
A free-born mind: and tell him, to behold
A tyrant humbled, and by virtuous death
To seal my country's freedom, is a good
Surpassing all, his boasted pow'r can give. 295

He said, the Persian hastens through the pass.
But now once more Diomedon arose.
Wrath overcasts his forehead, while he spake.

YET more must stay and bleed. Inglorious Thebes
Never shall receive her traitors back, but here 300
Shall they attone their perfidy by death,
Ev'n from their swords, to whom their abject hearts
Have sacrific'd their faith. Nor dare to hope,
Ye vile deserters of the public weal,
Ye coward slaves, that mingled with the heaps 305
Of those, who perish in their country's cause,
You shall your shame conceal. Who'er shall pass

Along this field of glorious slain, and trace
 With veneration ev'ry nobler corse;
 His soul, though warm with generous applause, 310
 A while shall curb the transport to repeat
 Its execrations o'er your impious heads,
 On whom that fate, which gives to others fame,
 Is infamy and vengeance. Dreadful thus
 On the pale Thebans sentence he pronounc'd, 315
 Like Rhadamanthus, from th' infernal throne
 When with inexorable frowns he doom'd
 The guilty dead to ever-during pain;
 While Phlegethon its flaming billows roll'd
 Before their sight, and ruthless furies shook 320
 Their hissing serpents. All the Greeks assent
 With clamours echoing through the concave rock.

FOR TH Anaxander in th' assembly stood,
 And thus began with indignation feign'd.
 If yet your clamours, Grecians, are allay'd, 325
 Behold, I stand before you to demand,
 Why these my brave companions, who alone
 Of all the Thebans under my command

Durft force their passage through disfluating crouds
 To join your host, should now be traitors deem'd;
 Accus'd by one alone, a banish'd wretch, 331
 Whom Lacedæmon in her anger drove
 Far from her confines; one, who meanly sought
 A servile court for shelter; has he drawn
 Such virtues thence, that Sparta, who before 335
 Held him unworthy of his native foil,
 Should trust him now before auxiliar friends?
 Injurious Greeks! we scorn the thought of flight,
 Let Asia bring her millions; unconstrain'd
 We wait the conflict, and for Greece will die. 340

Thus in the garb of virtue he adorn'd
 Necessity, deluding ev'ry Greek
 Except Laconia's hero. He perceiv'd
 Through all its fair disguise the traitor's heart.
 So, when at first mankind in science rude 345
 Rever'd the moon, as bright with native beams,
 Some sage, that walk'd with Nature through her
 works,
 By wisdom led, discern'd, the various orb

Itself

Itself was dark, in foreign splendours clad.

Now unexpected with his troops return'd 350

Dieneces, and thus to Sparta's king.

I NEED not tell thee, that the Persian pow'r's
Have pass'd the secret strait. This night they halt,
But with the morning will invade us here.
We come to die with thee. United thus, 355
Our strength a fiercer contest shall maintain;
Whence a more bright example to our friends,
And stranger terror of the Grecian name.

He said, when thus Leonidas began.

O Spartans, hear, and all you other Greeks, 360
Whose matchless virtue shall inroll your names
In time's eternal records, and enhance
Your country's lustre; lo! the setting sun
Inflames the broad horizon. All retire, 365
And in your tents invoke the pow'r of sleep
To aid your vigour, and to give your limbs
Unwearied patience of continued toil;
But when the second watch begins, let all

With

With mutual exhortation rouse to arms: 370

For soon, as Cynthia from the vault of heav'n
Hath hung her shining lamp, through Asia's host
Shall death with horrour and amazement rage.

Their camp is open to our swords, depriy'd
Of all its chosen warriours. But I charge 375

All, ev'n the Spartans, who are maim'd, or weak,
To pain, or toil unequal, from our camp

This hour to hasten. You, our brave allies
Of Corinth, Phlius, with th' Arcadian bands

And Mycenæans must not yet return, 380
But here, while we repose, in arms remain;
When we our tents abandon, then depart.

He said, all heard obedient, and dispers'd;
While to his tent the godlike chief repairs,
And with him Agis, whom he thus bespake. 385

O Agis, hear and mark my last command.
With wary skill dispose the nightly guard,
That no deserter from the Theban tents
May reach the camp of Asia, or ascend

To

To those now halting on the neighb'ring hills: 390

Nor yet with us the faithless band must join.

Not with such base associates must we trust

Our great design. Their perfidy might soon

Find means to rouse the unsuspecting foe,

And all our glorious enterprise confound. 395

Then, O my faithful Agis, e'er we move,

While on the solemn sacrifice intent,

As Lacedæmon's sacred laws ordain,

Our pray'rs we offer to the tuneful nine,

Do thou in whispers charge the Theban train 400

Slow and in silence to disperse and fly.

This said, they parted. On his couch alone

Reclines the hero, where he thus revolves.

My fate is now impending. O my heart!

What more auspicious period could I chuse 405

For death, than now; when beating high with joy

Thou tell'st me, I am happy? If to live,

Or die, as Virtue dictates, be to know

The purest bliss; if she her charms display

Still beauteous, still unfading, still serene. 410

To

To youth, to age, to death; whatever be
 Those other climes of uncorruptive joy,
 Which Heav'n in dark futurity conceals,
 Still here, O Virtue, thou art all our good.

Then what a black, unspeakable reverse 415

The wretched offspring of Injustice prove?
 What in the struggle of departing day,
 When life's last glimpse extinguishing presents
 Th' unknown, inextricable gloom of death?

But can I paint the terrors of a breast, 420

Where guilt resides? Leonidas forego
 The horrible conception, seek again
 Thy own untroubled heart, and grateful bow
 To those benignant pow'rs, who fram'd thy mind
 In crimes unfruitful, never to admit 425

The black impression of a guilty thought.

Else could I fearless thus relinquish life?

No. Such unshaken calmness from th' unjust
 Is ever absent. Oft in them the rage

Of some prevailing passion for a time 430

Suppresses fear. Oft hurried on they lose
 The sense of danger, when dominion, pow'r,

And

And purple pomp their dazzled sight enchant.

Yet still the joys of life alone they seek.

But he, who calmly meets resistless fate,

435

When glory only, and the gen'ral good

Invite him forward, must possess a soul,

Which all content deducing from itself

Can by unerring virtue's constant light

Discern, when death is worthy of his choice. 440

The man, thus great and happy, in the scope

Of his large mind is stretch'd beyond his date;

Ev'n on this shore of being he in thought

Supremely bless'd anticipates the good,

Which late posterity from him derives. 445

THE hero clos'd his meditation here,

The swelling transports of his mind subside

In soft oblivion, while the filken plumes

Of sleep envelop his extended limbs.

End of the Seventh Book. ■■■

LEONI-

LEONIDAS.

BOOK VIII.

The Argument.

Leonidas rising about three hours before midnight relates to an assembly of the leaders a dream, which is interpreted by Megistias; he then arms himself, and marches in procession with his whole troop to an altar newly rais'd on a neighbouring meadow, and there offers a sacrifice to the Muses: he invokes the assistance of those Goddesses, he animates his companions, and then placing himself at their head leads them against the enemy in the dead of the night.

SCARCE was begun the second watch of night,
When his pavilion Agis left, and sought
The chief of Lacedæmon. Him he found
Spread on his tranquil couch, while, o'er his face
Diffus'd,

Diffus'd, a glad serenity with smiles 5
 His slumber painted; like an ev'ning sky
 Yet streak'd with ruddy light, when summer suns
 Have veil'd their beaming foreheads. Transport fill'd
 The eye of Agis. Friendship swell'd his heart,
 And veneration. On his knee inclin'd. 10
 The hero's hand he kiss'd, and thus began,

O THOU with more than human virtues great,
 Accept this homage! and may gentle sleep 10
 Yet longer close thy eyelids, that unblam'd
 I thus may bow before thee. Thus he spake 15
 And, prostrate bent, his godlike friend rever'd,
 Whose eye the shades of slumber now forfacke.
 So, when new rising heav'n's resplendent orb
 Illumines first the sable skirts of night,
 The white-rob'd Magi, or the Indian seers 20
 Are seen from Ganges, or Euphrates' side,
 Before th' emerging glory bow'd to hail
 The radiant emblem of th'immortal mind.

BOTH heroes rose, and mix'd their friendly arms,
 And now to Agis had the Spartan king 25

Disclos'd his soul; when lo! the Grecian chiefs,
All rous'd, advancing with the sudden gleam
Of armour pierc'd the twilight shade. With joy
Leonidas accosts them. O thrice hail!

My virtuous friends. Approach, and all attend, 30
While I relate, and you with wonder hear.

This night no sooner sleep oppress'd my brows,
But o'er my head the empyreal form
Of my great sire Alcides seem'd display'd.

I saw his magnitude divine; his voice 35
I heard, his solemn mandate to arise.

I rose. He bade me follow: I obey'd.

Up to a mountain, whose ethereal brow
Th' involving clouds divided, we ascend.

E'er long we rested, suddenly the howl 40
Of wolves and dogs, the vulture's piercing shriek,

The yell of ev'ry beast and fowl of prey

Within my ears discordant broke. I turn'd.

When lo! a surface all with gore deform'd
Beyond my view illimitable stretch'd, 45

One vast expanse of horrour. There a corse,
Which with its huge dimensions seem'd to hide

Th' un-

Th' unbounded plain, lay weltring, red with
wounds

Delv'd in th' enormous limbs, which bleeding gorg'd
The vulture's famine. Wond'ring I beheld, 54
When from behind I heard a second sound,
Like surges tumbling o'er a craggy shore.

Again I turn'd. An ocean there appear'd
With riven keels, and shrouds, and shiver'd oars,
With arms, and mangled carcases bestrewn 55

Innumerous. The billows foam'd with blood,
And whelm'd a crimson deluge o'er the strand.

But, where the waters unobserv'd before
Between two adverse shores contracting roll'd
A stormy tide, upon the beach, forlorn, 69
One of majestic stature I descried

In ornaments imperial. Oft on me
He bent his clouded eye-balls. On my name
With imprecations oft he call'd aloud,
Then rent his splendid garments, and his head 65
In rage divested of its graceful hairs.

Impatient now he ey'd a slender skiff,
Which mounted on the curling foam approach'd.

With indignation, and reluctant grief

Once more his sight reverting, he embark'd 70

Amid the perils of the frowning waves.

Θ thou, whose virtue rank'd thee with the gods

(I here exclaim'd) instruct me, what produc'd

This desolation; when the god return'd.

Let thy astonish'd eye again review,

75

What thou didst late abhor. I look'd and saw

A hand, where Plenty with disporting hand

Pour'd all the fruits of Amalthea's horn;

Where bloom'd the olive, and the clustering vine

With its broad foliage mantled ev'ry hill;

80

Where Ceres with exuberance inrob'd

The pregnant bosom of the fields in gold;

Where spacious towns, whose circuits proud contain'd

The dazzling works of wealth, unnumber'd shone,

The strength and splendour of the peopled land. 85

Then in a moment clouds obscur'd my sight,

And all was vanish'd from my waking eyes.

THRICE we salute the omen (thus began

The sage Megistias) in thy mystic dream

I see the Grecian victories. The earth, 90
The deep shall own their triumphs; and the tears
Of Asia, and of Lybia shall bewail
Their offspring cast before the vulture's beak,
And all the monstrous natives of the main.
Those joyous fields of plenty shall be Greece 95
Enrich'd with conquest, and Barbarian spoils.
And whom thou saw'st in regal vesture clad
Print on the sands his solitary steps,
Is Xerxes foil'd and fugitive from Greece.

MEGISTIAS thus, while ev'ry bosom felt 100
Enthusiastic rapture, joy beyond
All sense, and all conception but of those,
Who die to save their country. Here again
Leonidas th' exulting chiefs address'd.

SINCE happiness from virtue is deriv'd, 105
Who for his country dies, that moment proves
Most happy, as most virtuous. Such our lot.
To this the gods shall add eternal fame.
But now go forth, Megistias, and with speed

Prepare the victim, and the sacred flames; 110

That to the Muses, as the Spartan law

Commands, our pray'rs and off'rings may be paid,

E'er to yon camp our hostile feet we bend,

But, O remember, from the solemn rites

Let ev'ry sound be absent, not the pipe, 115

Nor ev'n the music-breathing flute be heard.

Meantime, ye leaders, ev'ry band instruct

To move in silence, nor with shouts alarm

The midnight stillness. Mindful of their charge

The chiefs depart. Leonidas provides 120

His various armour. First the breastplate arms

His ample chest. O'er this the hero spreads

The mailed cuirass from his shoulders hung.

The shining belt infolds his mighty loins.

Next on his stately temples he erects 125

The plumed helm, then grasps his ponderous shield;

Where nigh the center on the swelling brae

Th' inimitable artist had imbos'd

The shape of great Alcides, whom to gain

Two goddesses contended. Pleasure here 130

Won with soft wiles th' attracted eye, and there

The

The form of Virtue dignified the scene,

In her majestic sweetness was disclos'd

The mind sublime and happy. From her lips

Seem'd eloquence to flow. With looks serene, 135

But fix'd intent upon the son of Jove,

She wav'd her hand, where winding to the skies

Her paths ascended. On the summit stood

Fame, and pretended her eternal trump,

Incumbent on a trophy near to heav'n. 140

The youth attentive to her wisdom own'd

The prevalence of Virtue; while his eye

With all the spirit, which redeem'd the world,

From tyranny and monsters, ardent flam'd;

Not undescried by Pleasure, where she lay 145

Stretch'd on a gorgeous carpet, which bespread

The meadow with magnificence. Around

Were bourets strown, and wantonly in rills

Soft streams meander'd. All relax'd her limbs,

Nor wanting yet solicitude to gain, 150

What lost she fear'd, as struggling with despair

She seem'd collecting all her pow'r of charms,

And with excess of sweet allurement smil'd:

In vain; for Virtue sway'd Alcides' mind.

Hence all his labours. Trac'd with various art 155

They fill'd the surface of the spacious targe.

This portraiture of glory on his arm

Leonidas supports. Then forth he tow'rs

From his pavilion. With their troops array'd

The chiefs attended. Flaming torches blaz'd 160

In ev'ry hand. An now with silent pace

All to the solemn sacrifice proceed.

First Polydorus with the hallow'd knife,

And barley strew'd with sacred salt advanc'd,

Diomedon beside him, in his grasp 165

A weighty mace sustaining. Like the rest

All bright in armour with his shield and spear

Megistias follow'd, an unspotted priest,

And dauntless warriour. From on high his helm

With wreaths around the shining crest reveal'd 170

His facerdotal honours. By the horns,

Where laurels twin'd, with Alpheus Maren leads

The consecrated ox. And lo! behind

Leonidas approaches. Ne'er before

With such transcending majesty he trod, 175

Nor

Nor his own virtue, as that hour, enjoy'd.
 Then venerable moves the Thespian chief,
 And great Denece. To them the bloom
 Of Dithyrambus glowing with the sense
 Of future praise succeeds, with graceful steps 180
 The gen'rous Agis next; the Thebans last
 Repining and inglorious. Then slow march
 The host all mute, nor shake their brazen arms.

Not from Thermopylæ remote the hills
 Of Oeta yielding to a fruitful dale 185
 Within their side half-circling had inclos'd
 A fair expanse with verdure smooth. The bounds
 Were edg'd with wood o'erlook'd by snowy cliffs,
 Which from the clouds bent frowning. From a rock
 Above the loftiest summit of the groves 190
 A tumbling torrent wore the shagged stone,
 Then gleaming through the interwoven shade
 The valley water'd. O'er the level shone
 Its glassy bosom, and with placid waves
 The smiling lawn divided. Near the banks, 195
 Which flow'rs made various, new-erected stood

A rustic altar, which a chosen train,
Appointed by Megistias, rais'd with turf
Cut by their falchions from the verdant mead:
Broad was the surface, high with piles of wood, 200
The plenteous tribute of th' adjacent groves,
All interspers'd with laurel. Here a vase
Fill'd with the briny waters of the sea
(More pure than ev'ry stream or fountain deem'd)
Was plac'd beside the altar. There with wine 205
Unmix'd capacious goblets stood arrang'd.
Here is the victim brought. Megistias streight
His helm unloosens. With his hoary head
Uncover'd round the solemn pile he treads,
And with a branch of laurel scatters wide 210
The sacred moisture of the main. His hand
With mingled salt and barley next bestrews
The altar, and the victim. O'er the horns
Th' inverted goblet foaming with the grape
Diffus'd the rich libation. Now advanc'd 215
Diomedon. Megistias gave command,
Down funk the victim with a deathful stroke,
Nor groan'd. Megistias buries in the throat

The

The hallow'd steel, A crimson deluge flows.
 Swift from the limbs the fuming hide is torn, 220
 The flesh dislever'd on the altar heap'd.
 Now smoaks the pile, then sudden flames abroad.
 A burst of splendour dissipates the dark.
 Greece throngs around. Each lifts a sparkling brand
 With beaming javelins intermix'd, and shields, 225
 And polish'd helms, which multiply the blaze.
 Meantime the great Leonidas drew nigh,
 And stood before the altar. There his helm
 Unclasp'd to Agis he commits, his shield
 And spear to Dithyrambus, then his arms 230
 Extending thus in supplication spoke.

HARMONIOUS daughters of Olympian Jove,
 Who on the top of Helicon ador'd,
 And high Parnassus, with delighted ears
 Bend to the warble of Castalia's wave, 235
 And Aganippe's murmurs, if from thence
 We must invoke your presence; or along
 The ridge of neighb'ring Pindus if your steps
 Now wander through your consecrated bow'rs,

Thence

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Thence turn, ye Muses, nor for once disdain 240
Each with her beauteous from these hills to grace,
And stand th' immortal witness of our fate!

But with you bring fair Liberty, whom Jove
And you most honour. Let her sacred eyes
Approve her dying Grecians, let her voice 245
With exultation tell the earth and heav'ns,
These are her sons; then strike your tuneful shells,
And with our praise bid harmony rejoice.

Record us guardians of our parents age,
Our matrons virtue, and our infants bloom, 250
And glorious bulwarks of our country's laws,
Who shall ennable the historian's page,
Or on the joyous festival inspire
With loftier strains the virgins choral song.

Then, O celestial maids, on yonder camp 255
Let night sit heavy, and a sleep, like death,
Weigh down the eye of Asia! O infuse
A cool, untroubled spirit in our breasts,
Which may in silence guide our daring feet
Through all the paths of slaughter, nor affright
The dark with tumult, till the dying groans 261

Of

Of gasping tyrants into horrour wake
The midnight calm! Then turn Destruction wild.
Bid Terror and Confusion revel round,
And in one carnage heap the Barb'rous ranks, 265
Their horse, and chariots. Let the spurning steed
Imbrue his hoofs with blood, and shatter'd cars
Crush with their brazen weight the prostrate necks
Of kings, and purpled chiefs incircled round 269
By nations fall'n. — You, countrymen and friends,
My last commands attend. Your gen'ral's voice
Once more salutes you, not to rouse the brave,
Or minds resolv'd and dauntless to confirm.
Too well by this expiring blaze I view
Impatient valour flash from ev'ry eye. 275
But temper well your ardour, and your lips
Close on the rising transport. Lo! how sleep
Hath folded millions in its black embrace.
No sound is wafted from th'unnumber'd foe.
The winds themselves are silent. All conspires 280
To this great sacrifice, where thousands soon
Shall only wake to die. Perhaps our swords
This night may send ev'n Xerxes' self to lead

Th' in-

Th' innumerable train of Persian ghosts
 To Pluto's dreary shade, unless reserv'd. 285
 From all this ruin to lament his shame,
 And future flight, when Greece confounds that
 pow'r,
 Which we will shake. But now the second watch
 Is verging to its period, and the moon
 Prepares to glimmer on our darksome steps. 290
 Let each his head distinguish with a wreath
 Of twining laurel; then the goblet crown,
 And share the victim. Take your last repast,
 For with your fathers, and the heroes old
 You next shall banquet in the blest abodes. 295

WHILE thus the hero, through the thronging
 files

Presenting round a hideous depth of war
 All shook with ardour their erected spears
 Thick, as the fruitful growth of lofty pines, 299
 Which from high Pelion's cloud-invested brow
 To heav'n's blue vault their stately honours bear.
 Megistias soon through all the band divides

The

The sacred laurel: snatch'd with eager zeal,
By ev'ry hand, and round each helmet wove,
It blends its verdure with the floating plumes. 305
Then is the victim portion'd, while the bowl
Flows with the vine's impurpled stream. Aloof
The Theban train in wan dejection mute
Brood o'er their shame, or cast a frightened eye
On that determin'd virtue, which unmov'd 310
At fate's approach with cheerful lips could taste
The sparkling goblet, and with joy partake
That last and glorious banquet. Ev'n the heart
Of Anaxander now forgets its wiles,
Its fear no more dissembling. Agis here 315
For ever mindful of his friend's command
Mix'd with the Thebans, and in whispers thus.

LEONIDAS permits you to retire.

While in the rites of sacrifice employ'd
None heed your motions. Separate, and fly 320
With silent steps. At once the Theban troop
Its ranks dissolving from the Greeks withdraws,
Unseen it moulders from the host, like snow.

Which

Which from the mountains in ten thousand rills,
Soon as the sun exerts his orient beam, 325
Descends soft-trickling, while the hoary heap
In sensibly decays. The Grecians soon
Conclude the solemn banquet, and their chief
Now reassumes his arms. Before his step
The crowd rolls backward. In their gladden'd sight
His crest irradiate with the uplifted brands 331
Its purple splendour shakes. The tow'ring oak
Thus from a lofty promontory waves
Its majesty of verdure, while with joy
The sailor marks its heav'n-ascending pride, 335
Which from afar directs his foamy course
Along the pathless Ocean; so the Greeks
Exulting gaz'd, as down their op'ning ranks
Their chief proceeds; from whose majestic grace
A soul like thine, O Phidias, might conceive 340
In Parian marble, or effulgent brass,
The form of great Apollo; when the god,
Won by the pray'rs of man's afflicted race,
In arms forsook his lucid throne to pierce
The monster Python in the Delphian vale 345

Chose

Close by the hero Polydorus waits
To guide destruction through the Asian tents.
As the young eagle near his parent's side
In wanton flight eaflys his vig'rous wings,
E'er long with her to penetrate the clouds, 350
To dart impetuous on the fleecy train,
And dye his beak with gore; by Sparta's king
The injur'd Polydorus thus prepares
His arm for death, and feasts his angry foul
With promis'd vengeance: his impatient thoughts
Ev'n now transport him furious to the seat 356
Of his long sorrows not with shackled hands,
But now once more a Spartan with his shield
And dreadful spear to lead his country's bands,
And with them vengeance. Nor the rest of Greece
Neglect to form. Their helmets now unite 361
Their various plumage, as th' intwining boughs
Mix their broad foliage in Dodona's grove;
Or like the cedars on the Syrian hills,
Which with their shady texture, as with night, 365
The gloomy soil o'ercast. In order'd ranks
While thus they stand, behold a warlyke form

In gleaming arms slow-moving through the shade,
Led by a slave, approach'd Laconia's king,
And thus address'd him. O Leonidas, 370
Thou seest before thee Eurytus, a name
To thee and ev'ry Spartan not unknown.
Thy ruling voice forbade the maim'd to stay;
I, whose dark orbs no longer knew the sun,
Immers'd in sudden blindness since our march 375
From Lacedæmon, with the rest withdrew,
Not to revisit Sparta, but, resolv'd
To meet the Persians, in the public way
I sat; not long, before th' increasing sound 379
Of trampling feet alarm'd me, which I deem'd
Were Persia's numbers rushing from the hills;
I started upward grasping in my hand
My spear and buckler, by my slave withheld,
Who told me, they were Thebans. Lo! I bear
The tidings of their flight. And now, my chief
And countrymen, farewell. Do you proceed, 386
With death and terror fill the hostile camp;
While I the fury of th' exulting foe
Descending from the mountains here await

To yield the last remains of tedious life 390

Now to my country useless, and to me, ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~and~~ ^{and}

And close these shaded eyes in endless night; ~~and~~ ^{and}

He ceas'd, when thus Léonidas began.

Then stay, my faithful soldier, and obtain

Not the least honours in this glorious night; 395

And you, my brave associates, all exult;

One spirit now inspires us; from our band

Doubt, fear, and treason with the Thebans fly:

While all with mutual confidence advance,

And equal fires. This said, once more the king A

On the deep phalanx his attentive eye ~~of which~~ 401

Reverts, and through the ruddy gleam descries

One face of gladness; but th' illustrious van

He most contemplates: Agis, Alpheus there,

Megistias, Maron, and Platæa's chief, 405

Dieneces, Demophilus are drawn,

And Dithyrambus. They their fixed sight

On him too bend with inexpressive joy,

With love, and veneration, till they hear

His last command; when instant to the earth 410

They cast th' extinguish'd brands. On all around
Drops sudden darkness, on the hills, the woods,
The silver stream, the rocks, and floating main.
It now was midnight. To the hostile camp
With steps compos'd and silent down the pass 415
The phalanx moves. Each patient bosom hush'd
Its struggling spirit, nor in whispers breath'd
The rapt'rous ardour, virtue then inspir'd;
But all await the moment doom'd to give
The Barb'rous millions to their deathful steel: 420
So low'ring clouds expanding from the north
Awhile suspend their horrors, destin'd soon
To blaze in lightnings, and to burst in storms.

End of the eighth Book.

LEONIDAS.

BOOK IX.

The Argument.

Leonidas and the Grecians penetrate through the Persian camp to the very pavilion of Xerxes, who avoids destruction by flight. The Barbarians are slaughter'd in great multitudes, and their camp is set on fire. Leonidas conducts his men back to Thermopylae, engages the Persians, who were descended from the hills, and after numberless proofs of superior strength and valour sinks down cover'd with wounds, and expires the last of all the Grecian commanders.

THE waining moon display'd her gleaming
 horns,
When o'er th' unguarded bound of Asia's camp
Now pass'd the Grecians. Through th' unnumber'd
 tents,

Where all was mute and tranquil, they pursue
Their silent march. The eastern world around 5
Lay stretch'd in slumber, motionless, and deaf,
Wrapt in the dead security of night,
Nor mark'd the steps of Fate. The wary Greeks
By Polydorus guided still proceed. 10
Ev'n to the center of th' extensive host
Unseen they pierc'd, when now th' imperial tent
Yet distant rose before them. Wide around
The proud pavilion stretch'd an ample space,
Where myriads might imbattle. Here a band 15
Of chosen Persians watchful round their king
Held their nocturnal station. As the hearts
Of anxious nations menac'd with the waste
Of meager famine, and the ruthless sword
Sink in their frozen bosoms, while despair 20
Sees fear-ingender'd fantoms in the sky,
Aërial hosts amid the clouds array'd,
Which seem to shake the firmament with war,
Portending woe and death; the Persians thus
Are smote with consternation, as the moon 25
By her faint beam discover'd from afar

The

The glimpse of Grecian arms, With sudden cries
They waken Horrour, which to Xerxes' couch,
And o'er th' astonish'd host, swift-winged flew
Dispelling sleep and silence. All the camp
Pours forth its numbers naked, pale, unarm'd, 30
Wild with amazement, blinded by dismay,
To ev'ry foe obnoxious; when at once,
Plung'd in ten thousand breasts, the Grecian steel
Reeks with destruction. Deluges of blood
Float o'er the field, and foam around the heaps 35
Of wretches slain unconscious of the hand,
Which mows them down by legions. From his couch
The lord of Asia, and of Lybia starts,
(Amaze, affright, distraction in his look),
And sees in thought united Greece advance. 40
Where then was fled thy empty regal pride,
The hope of glory, and the lust of pow'r?
What then avail'd th' innumerable range
Of thy huge camp save only to conceal
Thy trembling steps, O Xerxes, while thou fliest.
Leonidas before the Grecian van 46
Through bleeding thousands hews his dreadful way.

Before him Terrour strides. Gigantic Death,
And Desolation at his side attend,
With all the Furies of insatiate war.

50

To Xerxes' tent the hero speeds, nor finds
His victim. Ardent throngs of Grecians fill
The stately mansion; to the ground are hurl'd
The glitt'ring ensigns of imperial pow'r:
The diadem, the scepter, late ador'd
And fear'd by millions, underneath their feet
With mingled rage and scorn the Grecians crush,
A sacrifice to Freedom. Now return

55

The furious bands. Leonidas exalts
For new destruction his resistless spear,
When sudden night o'ershrouds the spangled heav'ns,
And clouds condensing intercept the moon.

60

Black o'er the furrow'd main the raging east
In whirlwinds sweeps the surge. Now roars the coast,
The crashing forests, and the cavern'd rocks.
Swift through the camp the hurricane impells
Its dire career, when Asia's numbers, veil'd
Amid the shelt'ring horrors of the storm,
Evade the Spartan lance. The Grecians halt,

65

By

By great Leonidas restrain'd and wait 70

Near Xerxes' tent their mighty leader's will.

BESIDE the high pavilion from the time,

That Xerxes near Thermopylæ had drawn

His num'rous bands, perpetual fire had shone;

Before whose sacred light the Persian lord 75

Was wont among his Magi to adore

The pow'r of Oromasdes: piles of wood

Lay nigh, prepar'd to feed the constant flame.

These on the altar by the Greeks are strewn,

So wills Laconia's hero; while the winds 80

Excite the blaze, his phalanx he divides;

Four bands are form'd, by Dithyrambus led,

By Alpheus, by Diomedon, the last

Himself commands. The word is giv'en; the Greeks

Press to the fire; soon shrink the burning heaps; 85

Destructive flames they brandish; and, injoin'd

To reassemble at the regal tent,

By various paths the hostile camp invade.

RESISTLESS desolation now involves

The Malian fields, as o'er the eastern tents 90

From diff'rent stations flew ten thousand brands

Hurl'd by the Greeks unresisted. The winds
With violence redoubled breathing round
Tempestuous rage exasperate the blaze.
The conflagration, like a sea, expands; 95
Collected now from ev'ry part it forms
One waving surface of unbounded fire.
In ruddy volumes mount the curling flames
To heavn's dark vault, and paint the midnight clouds.
So, when the north emits its purpled lights, 100
The undulating radiance streaming wide,
As with a burning canopy, invests
Th' ethereal concave. Oeta now disclos'd
Its forehead glitt'ring with eternal frost,
While down the rocks the foamy torrents shone. 105
Far o'er the main the pointed rays were thrown;
Night snatch'd her mantle from the ocean's breast;
The billows glimmer from the distant shores.
But where ascends a pillar huge of smoke
With wreathing flames incircled, Horrour there
And Death on great Leonidas attend. 111
He bade th' exulting Polydorus lead,
Where Asia's horse and chariots stood arrang'd;

There

There at his word devouring Vulcan feasts
On all the tribute, which Thessalia's meads 115
Yield to the scythe, and riots on the heaps
Of Ceres emptied of the ripen'd grain.
A flood of fire envelopes all the ground;
The cordage bursts of ev'ry blazing tent; 119
Down sink the roofs, and overwhelm the throng
Of wretches panting from the Spartan sword,
Close-wedg'd with fear; the Libyan chariot burns,
Th' Arabian camel, and the Persian steed
Bound through the fiery deluge; wild with pain
They shake their singed manes, with madd'ning hoofs
Dash through the blood of thousands, mix'd with
flames, 126
That rage augmented by the whirlwind's blast.

MEANTIME the scepter'd lord of half the globe
Through the wide tumult, like a guilty slave,
From tent to tent precipitates his flight. 130
Dispers'd are all his satraps; Pride itself
Shuns his dejected brow; Despair alone
With pale Confusion, and with frantic Fear
Wait on th' imperial fugitive, and shew,

As round the camp his eye distract'd roves, 135
No limits to destruction. Now was seen
Aurora mounting from the eastern hills
In rosy sandals, and with dewy locks :
The winds subside before her, darkness flies,
And streams of light proclaim the cheerful day. 140
When now at Xerxes' tent the Grecian band
Was re-united. What could Fortune more
To aid the valiant, and to gorge revenge ?
Lo ! Desolation o'er the Persian host
Hath emptied all its horro'rs; ev'n the hand 145
Of languid Slaughter drops its crimson steel;
Nor Nature longer can sustain the toil
Of ever-during conquest. Yet what pow'r
Among the Grecians once again reviv'd
Their drooping warmth; new-brac'd their nerves,
and call'd 150.
Their wearied swords to deeds of brighter fame ?
What, but th'inspiring hope of glorious death
To crown their labour, and th'auspicious look
Of their heroic chief, which still unchang'd,
Still with superior majesty declar'd, 155

No toil had yet relax'd his matchless strength,
Nor worn the vigour of his godlike soul.
Down to the pass with gentle march he leads
Th' imbattoled warriors. There behind the shrubs,
Which near the verdant feet of Oeta sprung, 160
Beside the entrance of the straits the Greeks
In ambush lay. The tempest now was calm'd;
Soft breezes only from the Malian wave
O'er each grim face, besmear'd with smoke and gore,
Their cool refreshment breath'd. The healing gale
Dispells the languor from their harass'd limbs, 166
Which swell with strength returning. After all
Th' incessant labours of the horrid night,
Through flames and war continu'd, they prepare
In order'd battle to confront the pow'rs 170
Of Hyperanthes, that selected band
From Asia's numbers, destin'd with the morn
To pass the mountains in triumphant march
With strength unwasted, and with souls elate.
Not long the Greeks in expectation stood 175
Impatient. Sudden with tumultuous shouts,
Like Nile's swift current, where with deafning roar

Prone

Prone from the steep of Elephantis falls
Its sea of waters, Hyperanthes pours
His rapid legions o'er the Grecian camp 180
Down from the hills precipitant. No foe
Is found to stop the torrent; on they roll
With thund'ring footsteps o'er the sounding pafs.

THAT night no sooner had the Theban train
Thermopylæ forsaken, but their course 185
They bent along the mountains, till they met
The pow'rs of Xerxes. Dusky twilight still
Prevailing, Persia with misguided rage
Affail'd her friends unknown. Th' impetuous spear
Of Hyperanthes clove the faithless heart 190
Of Anaxander; on, the hero press'd,
And spread destruction through their bleeding ranks;
Nor check'd his ardent valour, till he heard
The name of Thebes in suppliant cries proclaim'd:
The Persians then receive 'hem, in the front 195
As guides they place them, and, amaz'd to learn,
That daring Geece shoul' Xerxes' camp invade,
Haste from the mountains, rush along the pafs,

And

And now tumultuous issue from its mouth.

At once Laconia's leader gives the sign,

When, as th' impulsive ram with dreadful sway

O'erturns the nodding rampart from its base,

And strews a town with ruin, so the band

Of ferried heroes down the Malian steep,

An hideous depth, the blended numbers swept

Of Thebes and Persia. There no waters flow,

But horrid rocks present their craggy sides;

There dash'd whole legions. From their mangled

limbs

A tide of blood rolls foaming to the sea.

Again thy voice, Leonidas, is heard;

The Grecians turn; against the op'ning pass

They point their wheeling phalanx; on they rush:

Astonish'd Persia stops in full career,

Ev'n Hyperanthes starts with terror back.

Confusion drives fresh numbers from the shore,

Whelm'd in the Malian slime. Th' undaunted king

Of Lacedæmon enter'd now the straits,

And rang'd for battle. Hyperanthes soon

Recall'd his chosen warriours from their fear.

Swift

Swift on the great Leonidas was bent 220

A grove of darts; th' incourt'ring armies clos'd.

Whom first, whom last, great Spartan, didst thou foil?

What rivers heard along their echoing banks

Thy name in curses sounded from the lips

Of mothers wailing for their slaughter'd sons! 225

What towns with empty monuments were fill'd

For those, whom thy unconquerable sword

This day to vultures cast! First Bessus died,

An haughty satrap, whose tyrannic hand

Despoil'd Hyrcania of her golden sheaves, 230

And laid her forests waste. For him the bees

Among the branches interwove their sweets;

For him the fig was ripen'd, and the vine

With rich profusion o'er the goblet foam'd.

Then Dinis bled. On Hermus' side he reign'd, 235

And long had fought with unavailing love

Great Artemisia fam'd in Xerxes' fleet,

The martial queen of Caria. She disdain'd

The lover's soft complaint; her dauntless ear

Was

Book IX. L E O N I D A S. 241

Was taught to mark the tempest, while it rag'd:
Her sight was practic'd from the rolling deck 241
To brave the chafing billows; doom'd to meet
That day of horrour, when the weeping eye
Of Xerxes saw the blood of nations flow,
And to its bottom tinge the briny floods 245
Of Salamis, whence she with Asia fled,
She only not inglorious: low reclines
Her lover now, on Hermus' banks no more
To sound her name, nor tell the vocal graves
His fruitless sorrows. Then Madauces fell, 250
A Paphlagonian born amid the sound
Of dashing surges, and the roar of winds;
Who o'er th' unhospitable Euxine waves
Was wont from high Carambis' cliff to watch
Th' ill-fated bark, which cut the Pontic stream,
Then with his dire associates through the deep 256
For spoil and slaughter guide his hostile prow.
With these Tithraustes far from Medus fall'n,
His native tide, with blooming strength indu'd,
And manly grace, Lilæus, who had left 260
The balmy fragrance of Arabia's fields,

R

And

And Babylonian Tenagon expir'd.
His bravest friends on ev'ry side o'erthrown
With indignation Hyperanthes view'd,
And in fierce haste his dauntless arm oppos'd 265
To Sparta's hero. Each his lance protends,
But thousands rush with interposing shields,
Such sacred lives all anxious to defend;
Or thither fortune urg'd the tide of war,
Their term protracting for augmented fame. 270
So, when two gallies lab'ring through the foam
Present for battle their destructive beaks,
The billows oft, by hurricanes impell'd,
With mountainous commotion dash between,
And either bark in black'ning tempests veil'd 275
Waft from its distant foe. But fiercer burn'd
Thy ardor, mighty Spartan, while in blood
Thy falchion rag'd unwearied. Now the steeds
Of day were climbing their meridian steep,
And o'er the Persian camp the shouts of war 280
Burst from Thermopylæ. Pharnuchus heard,
Who from his couch beyond the Malian plain,
Rous'd by the tumult in the neighb'ring tents,

To aid his lord had left Thessalia's fields
 With Syria, Cholchis, and Armenia's bands, 285
 Th' Affyrians, and Chaldaean's. Asia's camp
 Was still the seat of terror and despair.
 As in some fruitful clime, which late hath known
 The rage of winds and floods, when now the storm
 Is heard no longer and the deluge fled, 290
 Still o'er the wasted region Nature mourns
 In melancholy silence, through the grove
 With prostrate glories lie the stately oak
 And elm uprooted, while the plains are spread 294
 With fragments swept from villages o'erthrown,
 And round the pastures flocks and herds are cast
 In weltring heaps of death; so Persia's host
 In horror mute one boundless scene displays
 Of desolation: half devour'd by fire
 Its tall pavilions, and its warlike cars 300
 Hide all the field with ruin; here in gore
 Its princes lie, and nameless thousands there,
 Here legions bleeding by the Grecian steel,
 There Persians slain by Persians still declare
 The wild confusion of the direful night, 305

When wanting signals, and their leaders care
They rush'd to mutual slaughter. Xerxes' tent
On its exalted summit, when the dawn
First streaks the glowing sky, was wont to bear
The gloden form of Mithra, clos'd between 310
Two lucid crystals, to the Barb'rous host
An awful signal all in arms to leave
Their crowded tents, and numberless to wait
Their monarch's presence; this Pharnuchus rears
High on the proud pavilion: at the sight 315
Their consternation is at length dispell'd,
And through th' assembling nations hope revives.
Pharnuchus then from all the number forms
A chosen train; Thermopylae he seeks;
Their march in loudest clamours is proclaim'd. 320
His phalanx soon Leonidas commands
To circle backward from the Malian shore:
Their order changes; now half-orb'd they stand
By Oeta's mountains guarded from behind
With either flank united to the rock. 325
As, by th' excelling architect dispos'd
To shield some haven, a stupendous mole,

Fram'd

Fram'd of the grove and quarry's mingled strength,
In ocean's bosom penetrates afar; 329

There stands the pride of art against the weight
Of seas, unmov'd, and breaks the whelming surge:
So, when Pharnuchus with innum'rous pow'rs
Thermopylæ had fill'd, th' unyielding Greeks
Oppos'd the hostile deluge, and its rage,
Unshaken stem'd. Amid the foremost rank 335
Leonidas his dreadful station held.

Before him soon an horrid void is seen
Through Persia's legions, and the proud remains
Of noblest chiefs th' insanguin'd rock bestrew.

Pharnuchus glowing with revenge and wrath 340
Discharges full at Lacedæmon's chief
His iron-studded mace. Aside it glanc'd,
Turn'd by the massy shield, and prone to earth
The Persian fell. Alcander to the rock
Transfix'd the prostrate satrap through the reins,
Himself receiving in th' unguarded side 346
The lance of Hyperanthes. Low he lies,
The only Theban, who by Sparta's king
Abode intrepid, and to Greece preserv'd

His faith untainted; a physician sage, 350

Who from Cithæron each benignant herb
Was wont to gather, and expatiate o'er
The Heliconian pastures, where no plant
Of poison springs, but such, whose healing juice
Expells the venom from the viper's tooth 355
Fill'd with the sweetnes of the soil divine:
Him all, who languish on the bed of pain,
Him most, the wretch, whom want, and sickness
spreads

On earth's cold breast neglected, shall deplore.

On him the brave Artontes sinks in death, 360

Renown'd through wide Bithynia, now no more
The clam'rous rites of Cybele to share,

While Echo murmurs through the hallow caves

Of Berecynthian Dindymus. The hand
Of Alpheus sent him to the shades of night. 365

E'er from the dead he disingag'd his spear,
Huge Abradates glorying in his strength,
Surpassing all of Cissian race, advanc'd
To grapple with the victor; near him now
His foremost step the Persian plants, his band 370

Grasps at the Spartan's shoulder. Alpheus once
 At Nemea's games the wrestlers crown obtain'd.
 His art he summons, and his rapid foot
 Obliquely strikes against the Persian's heel;
 He falling seiz'd on Alpheus' neck, and drag'd 375
 His foe upon him. Streight an hundred darts
 Of thronging Persia cleave the Grecian's back.
 To Abradates' breast the weapons pierce,
 And rivet both in death. This Maron saw,
 And Polydorus, who with victims fall'n 380
 Before their vengeance hide their brother's corse.
 At length the gen'rous blood of Maron warms
 The lance of Hyperanthes. On the spear
 Of Polydorus falls the pond'rous ax
 Of Sacian Mardus; from the yielding wood 385
 The steely points is sever'd. Undismay'd
 The Spartan stoops to rear the knotted mace
 Of slain Pharnuchus; but thy fatal sword,
 Abrocomes, that dreadful instant marks
 To rend his op'ning side; unconquer'd still, 390
 Swift he discharges on the Sacian's front
 An horrid wound, that reach'd the bursting brain.

Down his own limbs the while a torrent flows
Of vital crimson; smiling he surveys
His sorrows ending, and his Spartan name 395

Renew its lustre. Sudden to his side
Springs Dithyrambus; through th' uplifted arm
Of Mindus pointing his impetuous dart
Against the bleeding Spartan he impells
His steel resistless. Polydorus now 400

Stretch'd his cold hand to Thespias friendly chief,
Then bow'd his head in everlasting peace;
And Mindus wasted by his flowing wound
Beside him faints and dies. In Ninus old
Had his exalted ancestors sustain'd 405

Th' Assyrian scepter. Now to Persia's throne
A tributary lord he rul'd the vales,
Where Tigris swift between the parted hills
Of tall Niphates draws its foaming tide
Impregnating the glebe. At once a croud 410
Of ardent Persians seize the conqu'ror's lance:
An hundred arms infold it. Thespias youth
With one strong hand maintains the struggling spear,
The other bares his falchion. Through his foes,

With

With lightning wing'd it, scatters wounds and death.

Artaphrenes in torture feels his arm 416

Lopt from the shoulder. Zatis leaves his hand

Yet twining round the long-disputed lance.

On Pheron's neck descends the pond'rous blade;

Down drops the sever'd head; the vital stream 420

Spouts from its purple sluices. Mardon strides

Across the pointed ash. His weight o'ercomes

The wearied Grecian, who resigns his hold,

Yet cleaves th' exulting Persian to the brain.

But now the fierce Abrócomes approach'd, 425

And louring shakes his dart. The wary Greek

With his broad buckler intercepts the stroke,

And closes with the Persian. Then what aid

Of mortal force, or interposing heav'n

Preserv'd the eastern warriour? Lo! the friend 430

Of Teribazus eager to avenge

His lov'd companion, and at once to guard

A brother's life, beneath the sinewy arm,

That instant rais'd for slaughter, plung'd his lance

In Dithyrambus' side. The vital strings 435

At once relax; nor Fame, nor Greece demand

More from his valour, and supine he lies
In glories ripen'd on his blooming head.

Him shall the Thespian virgins in their songs
Record once loveliest of the youthful train, 440

The good, the gentle, generous, and brave;
Now fall'n his country's grace, and parent's pride:
So sinks the cedar, which in verdant bloom
High on the top of Libanus had stood

The mountain's boast, and glory of the grove; 445
Then to adorn the mansions of the great,
Or dignify some god's high-vaulted fane
Uprooted low'res its heav'n-aspiring head.

Diomedon bursts forward. Round his friend
He heaps destruction. What a troop of ghosts 450
Attend thy shade, fall'n hero! Long unmatch'd
Prevail'd his vengeful arm, and Persia bled;
Till four Affyrians on his shelving lance,
E'er yet extracted from a prostrate corse,
Their pond'rous maces all discharge. It broke. 455
Yet with the truncheon of his shatter'd spear
The Greek sustains the contest. Through his eye
The shiver'd fragment penetrates the brain

Of one bold warriour; there the splintry wood
Infix'd remains: the hero then unsheaths 460
His falchion broad; a second views aghast
His entrails falling, while Platæa's chief
From the gash'd belly draws his reeking fword:
Prone sinks a third beneath the falchion's weight;
Though with the furious stroke the yielding blade
Flew from the hilt, and left the Greek disarm'd: 466
The fourth that instant lifts his knotted mace;
It falls resistless on the batter'd helm,
And low the great Diomedon extends
His mighty limbs. So, weaken'd by the force 470
Of some tremendous engine, which the hand
Of Mars impells, a stately turret spreads
Its disuniting ramparts on the plain;
Joy fills th' affilants, while the battle's tide
Whelms o'er the widening breach. The Persians thus
O'er the late-fear'd Diomedon had rush'd, 476
And swept the Greeks before them; when behold
Leonidas! At once their ardour froze.
He had a while within the orb retir'd,
Oppress'd by labour. Now with strength restor'd 480

He pours fresh ruin from the Spartan front.

As, long retarded by th' unmoving calm,

Soon, as a rising gale fresh-breathing curls

The surging main, again the vessel bounds

With all her op'ning sails; the hero thus

485

His buckler huge, and formidable spear

Advancing, through the Asian files renews

His course of slaughter. Destiny compells

The bold Hydarnes to th' unequal fight,

Who proudly vaunting left his weeping bride

490

To mourn his absence on the distant verge

Of Bactrian Ochus. Victory in vain

He parting promis'd. Wanton hope no more

Round his cold heart delusive sports, nor paints

Th' imagin'd pomp of triumphs, gorgeous spoils,

And trains of shackled Greeks. The Spartan pierc'd

His shield, and bursting corselet. From the slain

The victor draws his iron-pointed spear

Bent, and infeebled with the forceful blow.

Meantime within his buckler's verge, unseen

500

Amphistreus stealing, in th' unguarded flank

His poniard struck. With swift effusion gush'd

A crimson torrent, but the scaly mail
Immediate death repell'd. Th' indignant king
Gripes with restless might the Persian's throat, 505
And drags him prostrate. None in Xerxes' court
Was more corrupt, with insolence more base,
With rancour more fallacious. Phrygia pin'd
Beneath th' oppression of his ruthless sway.
Was there a field once fruitful, or a town 510
Once populous and rich? The horrid change
To want and desolation there declar'd,
The curs'd Amphistreus govern'd. As the spear
Of Tyrian Cadmus riveted to earth
The pois'nous dragon, whose infectious breath, 515
Had blasted half Bœotia; so the chief
Of Lacedæmon trampling on the neck
Of fall'n Amphistreus fixes to the rock
The gasping tyrant, and his broken lance
Leaves in the panting corse. Meanwhile thy wound 520
Incessant flows, great hero, and augments
The hopes of Persia, Thou unyielding still
Sustain'st the contest, while unnumber'd darts
Are shiver'd on thy buckler, and thy feet

With

With glitt'ring points bestrew; the Cholchian sword
And Persian dagger leave their shatter'd hilts; 526
Bent is the Caspian scymetar; in vain
The Sacian wheels his falchion, and their mace
The strong Chaldæans and Assyrians raise:
Thou stand'st unshaken, like a Thracian hill, 530
Like Rhodopé, or Hæmus; where in vain
The thund'rer plants his livid bolt, in vain
The glancing lightning cleaves th' incrustèd snow,
And Winter beating with eternal war
Shakes from his dreary wings discordant storms, 535
Chill fleet, and clatt'ring hail. But now advanc'd
Abrocomes, and aim'd his deadly spear
Against the forehead of Laconia's chief, before his fall
Not unperceiv'd; the Spartan's active hand
His sword opposing upward rears the blade 540
Against the threatning javelin; o'er his crest
Its fury wastes in air, while swift descends
The pond'rous falchion on the Persian's knee:
At once the bone is sever'd; prone he falls;
Crush'd on the ground beneath ten thousand feet, 545
The gallant warriour breaths the last remains

Of tortur'd life. The Spartan thus maintain'd
Th' unequal combat with his single sword.
But Agis calls Diéneces, alarms
Demophilus, Megistias; they from heaps 550
Of Allarodian and Sasperian slain
Haste to their leader, and before him raise
The brazen bulwark of their massy shields.
The foremost line of Asia stands and bleeds;
The rest recoil: but Hyperanthes strides 555
From rank to rank throughout his various host,
Their dying hopes rekindles, in the brave
Excites new valour, and the freezing heart
Of Fear revives. Astaspes first obey'd
The hero's voice, a fierce Chaldæan lord 560
Vain of his birth from antient Belus drawn,
Proud of his wealthy stores, and stately domes;
But now more proud by conquest, since his might
Had foil'd the strong Diomedon. He seeks
The front of battle. His victorious mace 565
Against the brave Diéneces he bends;
The weighty blow bore down th' opposing shield,
And crush'd the Spartan's shoulder: idle hangs

The

The buckler now, and loads th' inactive arm
Depriv'd of all its functions. Agis bares 570
His vengeful blade, and severs from the foe
His hand exalted for a second stroke.
The dying fingers with convulsive grasp
The falling mace infold. A Sacian chief
Springs on the victor. Jaxartes' banks 575
To this brave savage gave his name and birth.
His looks erect, and fierce deportment spoke
A bold and gallant spirit, but untam'd,
With dreary wilds familiar, and a race
Of rude Barbarians horrid as their clime. 580
The hostile spear, against his forehead aim'd,
Glanc'd upward, and o'erturn'd his iron cone:
The blow renew'd his bursting chest divides.
Th' undaunted Sacian writhes along the lance,
Which girding passes through his breast and back, 586
A barbed arrow from his quiver draws,
Deep in the streaming pap of Agis hides
The deadly steel, then grimly smiles and dies.
From him Fate hastens to a nobler prey;
For lo! the brave Dieneces presents 590
His

His breast obnoxious to a thousand darts,

The shield deserts his unsustaining arm,

And slides to earth. A grove of javelins rose

On his broad bosom. Still for ev'ry wound

He hurl'd a Persian to th' infernal gloom; 595

But life at length forsook his riven heart,

And o'er the rock the gasping hero stretch'd

His dying limbs in gore. Who now can stand

The torrent of Barbarians? Agis bleeds,

His spear is irrecoverably plung'd 600

In Iaxartes' body. Low reclines

Diéneces in blood. The Spartan chief,

Himself o'erlabour'd, of his lance disarm'd,

The rage of Death can exercise no more.

One last and glorious effort age performs: 605

Demophilus, Megistias join their might,

And stem the floods of conquest; while the spear

Of slain Diéneces to Sparta's king

The fainting Agis bears. The blazing steel

In that dire hand again for battle rear'd 610

Blasts all the Persian valour. Back in heaps

They roll confounded, by their leader's voice

His

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In

In vain exhorted longer to endure
The ceaseless waste of that unconquer'd arm.
So, when the giants from Olympus chas'd 615
Th' inferiour gods, themselves in terrour shun'd
Th' incessant streams of lightning, when the hand
Of heav'n's great-father with eternal might
Sustain'd the direful conflict. O'er the field
Awhile Bellona stills the rage of war; 620
When Thespa's leader, and Megistias drop
At either side of Lacedæmon's king.
Beneath the weight of years and labour bend
The hoary warriours. Not a groan molests
Their parting spirits, but in death's calm night, 625
All-silent bows each venerable head:
Like aged oaks, whose deep-descending roots
Had pierc'd resistless through the mountain's side,
And there for three long centuries had brav'd
Each angry gust of Eurus, and the North; 630
Till, sapless now by Time's despoiling hand,
Without a blast their mossy trunks recline
Before their parent hill. By Sparta's chief
None now remains but Agis, who implores

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The last kind office from his godlike friend, 635

The Sacian's arrow from his bow to draw.

This done, life issues with the sanguine tide.

Thy comely features, Agis, now are pale;

Cold are thy graceful limbs, and dim thy eyes,

Which now no more with placid beams reveal 640

The native virtues of thy gentle breast.

The noble corse Leonidas surveys.

Fate yields him one short interval of peace.

To know how lovely are the patriot's wounds,

And see those honours grace the man, he lov'd. 645

But Hyperanthes with his single spear

Forth from the trembling ranks of Asia tow'r's

His country's glory to redeem, or fall.

The Spartan worn by toil his languid arm

Once more uplifting waits the dauntless prince. 650

The heroes now stood adverse. Each a while

Restrain'd his valour, and his godlike foe

Admiring view'd. Such majesty and strength

To fierce Pelides all incircled round

With Trojan dead; and such to Priam's son 655

By struggling virtue, and by manly shame

From flight recall'd, great Homer's fancy gave.

O thou exalted o'er the laurel'd train

High, as the sweet Calliope is thron'd

Above each virgin of the tuneful hill; 660

Now let one beam of thy celestial light

Dart through my lab'ring mind; lest Freedom mourn

Her chosen son dishonour'd in these strains!

Now Hyperanthes, and Lacenia's king

With brandish'd points, and targets high uprear'd

Commence the fatal combat, which must close 666

The long-continu'd horro'rs of the day.

Fix'd with amaze and fear, the Asian files

Unmov'd and silent on their bucklers pause.

Thus o'er th' expanse of India's wilds contend 670

The elephant, and horn'd rhinoceros;

Earth groans beneath them, as with wrath untam'd

Each hideous bulk in dire encounter meets:

With distant terro'ur gaze the savage throng,

Prolong'd by varied art, the dubious fight

The great event suspended. On the foe

His well-aim'd spear a last the Spartan drove,

And

And pierc'd the shield. Inexorable fate
That moment hover'd o'er the eastern prince,
When with unmatch'd celerity aside 680
He swung his buckler; underneath his arm,
Unstain'd with blood the hostile javelin pass'd:
Meantime, with joy, and ardent hopes elate
Of fame and conquest, sudden he impell'd
His rapid lance against the Spartan's throat; 685
But he with wary skill his target rais'd,
And o'er his shoulder turn'd the glacing steel;
For one last effort then his scatter'd strength
Recall'd, and wheeling with resistless force
His massy buckler dash'd the brazen verge 690
Against the Persian's forehead: down he sunk
Without a groan expiring, as o'erwhelm'd
Beneath a marble fragment from its seat
Heav'd by a whirlwind sweeping o'er the ridge
Of some aspiring mansion. Gen'rous prince! 695
What could his valour more? His single might
He match'd with great Leonidas, and fell
Before his native bands. The Spartan chief
Now stands alone. In heaps his slaughter'd friends

All stretch'd around him lie. The distant foes 700
Show'r on his head innumerable darts.
From various sluices gush the vital floods,
And stain his fainting limbs. Nor yet with pain
His brow is clouded, but those beauteous wounds,
The sacred pledges of his own renown, 705
And Sparta's safety, with serenest joy
His closing eye contemplates. Fame can twine
No brigther laurels round his glorious head,
His virtue more to labour Fate forbids,
And lays him now in honourable rest 710
To seal his country's liberty in death.

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End of the Ninth and Last Book.

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